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PLAN OF THE CREATION;

OR,

Other Worlds, and Who Inhabit Them.

Charles ^{BY} Louis
REV. C. L. HEQUEMBOURG.

III

"Tout est dit : et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus de sept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes, et qui pensent." *Translation*.—Everything has been said : and those come too late who come after men have existed and thought for seven thousand years and more.

CHARACTÈRES DE LA BRUYÈRE.

"We prophesy in part."—ST. PAUL.

"Yet these were, when no man did them know,
Yet have from wisest ages hidden beene ;
And later times things more unknown shall show.
Why, then, should witlesse man so much misweene
That nothing is, but that which he hath seene ?
What if within the moone's fayre, shining spheare,
What if in every other starre unseene,
Of other worldes he happily should heare ?
He wonder would much more."

FAIRIE QUEENE.

BOSTON:
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1859.

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P R E F A C E .

THE author has been disinclined, perhaps more and longer than he ought, to add anything to the materials of religious controversy. These materials have proved rather combustible; and no one who values his peace, or the commandment of charity, would willingly stir up the acrimony and fierceness which many have deemed so legitimate in religion. Religious controversy has, in all ages, partaken of such a character as to render the study of religion, when anything new was to be learned, the most uninviting of all others. Opposition, detraction, the dungeon, and even the fires of the stake, have presented themselves before the hardy adventurer who has, obeying his conscience and the word of God, opened a new leaf of the word of life to a perishing world.

The intelligent reader of much that is called church history must be convinced that a spirit very different in intelligence and goodness from that which inspired the divine word has presided over a great part of

religious controversy. Whether this old demon has gone to rest, may be put to the proof in this age.

But, if every new truth must take its place of importance and influence through some opposition, and every great religious truth must sustain an ardent resistance, our disinclination to disturb the opinions of the world must yield to the obligation of serving our generation in the sphere, however difficult or painful, to which Providence calls us. In religion, a refusal to utter an important doctrine of the Scriptures is a pusillanimity and a treason, which furnish very poor evidence of fitness for the kingdom of God. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." If "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," we ought not to shrink from this test.

The reader, it is believed, will find many things worthy of attention in this volume, as having their authority in revelation. He will, if he follows the author through the volume, see some portions of the scripture with new eyes.

Let him not turn back, however, at the threshold, in the fear that he shall discover anything which will diminish his reverence for the Scriptures, or weaken his sense of the obligation of Christian virtue. Every principle established in the following pages will heighten his regard for the sacred volume, and increase his desire, and stimulate his exertions, to have a part in the "everlasting life" in which sin and sinners can never

share. That this may be the result of the reader's perusal of the present volume, is the author's fervent prayer.

A few things further seem also to be necessary for the information of the reader.

He will not find speculations offered to his attention; but truth, if it is producible in statement and in evidence, will be offered to his mind.

It is a vulgar saying, "that what is new is not true." The reader, although unlearned, will not credit the truth of this vulgar saying, who thinks how much he knows of what his fathers were ignorant; and the learned reader will not regard it as worthy of his attention for a moment.

The truths, however, which are presented in this volume, are not so new that no glimpses of them have existed in any former age, or that nothing has been attempted in them at the present time. No truth ever appears to have come into the world without any preparatory measures. Glimmerings of the true doctrine of the solar system appear to have existed in remote ages of antiquity, some of which are known to have guided the mind of Copernicus.*

Glimpses of the subjects which will be treated in

* Aristarchus of Samos, Nicetas, and even the author of the book of Job, appear to have had some conceptions of the true physical system of the Creation.

this volume may be found in the studies of such men as Warburton, Owen, Watts, Locke, Fuller, and some others.

Sects and persons not deemed evangelical have also, in the singular providence of God, strayed near the truth upon these subjects.

To assemble these dispersed rays of truth, and to trace them to the great orb to which they belong, must be a valuable service to the world.

Astronomers, it may be further observed, have revealed to us the existence of other worlds; but they have not taught us their uses, nor the principles higher than gravitation which govern them. When these are comprehended, our general knowledge of the Plan of Creation will be complete.

It may also be remarked, for the information of the reader, that the first half of this book is occupied with a general outline of the subject and evidence; and that in the latter half, beginning at the fourth part, which comprises more than half the volume, the subject is completely exhibited and proved. The reason for this arrangement will sufficiently appear in the sequel.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE EXTENT OF OUR RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

Robinson's Charge to the Pilgrims of the Mayflower. — Declaration of Franklin. — Conclusion to be derived from the Sectarian Divisions of Christians. — Little Progress in Religious Discovery since the Reformation. — Persistency of Sectarian Characters. — The Idea of Orthodoxy. — Reasons for Believing that some Errors have been admitted into our Systems of Religion. — Manner in which the Bible has been Written. — Dependence of Religious Studies upon the Clerical Profession. — Theological Instruction. — Historical Causes which are known to have produced a Misapprehension of Religion. — The Reformation. — The Association of all Great Religious Reformations with some New Development of Divine Truth. — Wickliffe, and other Reformers. — Two Facts, which will completely settle the Question whether Discoveries in Religion are Practicable.

“WHEN the Pilgrim Fathers,” observes Sir Charles Lyell,* “were about to sail in the Mayflower from Leyden, a solemn fast was held before they embarked, and their pastor, Robinson, gave them a farewell address, in which *these memorable words* are recorded :

“ ‘ I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. *The Lord has more truth yet to break out of his Holy Word.* For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches,

* “ A Second Visit to the United States.”

who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no further than the instruments of the first Reformation. The Lutherans are not to be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. Whatever part of his will our good God has imparted and revealed unto Calvin, they will die rather than embrace it. And the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery yet to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God: but, were they now living, they would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received. I beseech you to remember it; it is an article of your *Church covenant*, that you will be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known unto you from the written Word of God. Remember that, and every other article of your sacred Covenant.’”

We may add, from Robbins,* another sentence from this address: “But I must herewithal exhort you to take heed what you receive as truth, — examine it, consider it, and compare it with other Scriptures of truth, before you receive it; for it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such Anti-Christian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.”

It would be singular, if this sagacious prediction should be realized by the Church, or its offspring, which was so faithfully and intelligently exhorted. And it reminds us of the dying declaration of Franklin, that, in his apprehension, Christianity did not now exist in the same purity as that in which it came from the hands of its Founder.

The unprejudiced judgment of every person, upon the

* “Historical View of the First Planters of New England.”

variety of the conflicting sects in Christendom, must be, that the truth has not been universally nor fully attained. There must have been mistake, where men of the greatest capacity, and of unquestionable purity of motive, have arranged themselves upon opposite sides; and have defended their respective opinions so earnestly as to show that they deemed them essential to the purity of the Christian faith.

The observation of Robinson is manifestly worthy of attention, that it is not possible that the Christian world should have so recently come out of the darkness of the Papacy, and have attained to the light all at once. This observation will appear to the reader to be more important, since there has been really little progress made in religious discovery since the earlier periods of the Reformation. This may be accounted for partly in the fact that more attention has been paid to the development of religion in the heart; which the Reformation, in the enthusiasm of its discoveries, comparatively neglected. Nevertheless, the discussions and progress which have since taken place, with a few exceptions, have related to forms of government, and to the philosophical adjustment of religious doctrines with each other. Some very eminent examples of refutations of sceptical doctrines have occurred; and the subject of the Christian life, and the necessity of earnestness in religion, have been very ably exhibited. But much time has been spent and wasted in endeavoring to ascertain the philosophy of regeneration, and the reconcilableness, by metaphysical methods, of the decrees with the freedom of man, and with the Divine goodness. The study of Biblical criticism has indeed been pursued with remarkable success. The intellectual labors of the Christian world have, therefore, not been barren; but it is obvious that they have been labors

upon the ground-work of the Reformation, without extending its base.

Nor does Mr. Robinson unfitly allude to the *disposition* of Lutherans not to go any further than Luther; and to that of the Calvinists to "stick fast," as he expresses it, where Calvin left them. This spirit has frequently risen to the actual character of a resistance to original investigations. Seemingly forgetful of the benefits of free inquiry, in producing the Reformation, and of the development of Christian doctrine by other laborers besides Luther, all parties have seemed disposed at different times, and some determined, to crystallize religion in the idea of Orthodoxy; which has been a changeable conception, a sort of idolatrous phantom, and has meant the existing opinions of a sect or combination of Christians. A venerable clergyman once humorously replied to the question, What is Orthodoxy? "It is *my*-doxy."* The effort to comprise religion in any present character has been to freeze it, and to render it devoid of the interest which free inquiry must necessarily awaken.

Those who remember the particular history of the Reformation will call to mind, that a too successful effort was early made by European synods to render particular explanations of religious truth the bond of Christian union. This, of course, where there was any enlargement of mind, or spirit of independence, was only to aggravate the difficulty which it was intended to remove; and to sever the Christian world into sects, which would come to look uncharitably, and even fiercely, at each other: for investigation would frequently destroy these explanations; when the bond of union, attempted to be effected by doctrines,

* Dr. M. L. R. Perrine, late of Auburn.

would be sundered. Bossuet, the ablest antagonist which the Reformation ever had, endeavored to turn these unhappy divisions to a derision of the pretensions of Protestants to make a nearer approach to true religion than Romanists; since they were not agreed among themselves.* It must be admitted to be at least true, that they show that Protestants have not completely attained to the truth. And the examples afforded by the persecutions of Duffield, of Barnes and Beecher in this country, like that of Piscator in the seventeenth century, show, that a disposition to coërcé a particular religious belief still lingers; while the error of preceding generations has been very clearly displayed. Indeed, what right can any body of Christians claim, to require that men shall assent to *their* explanations of the Scriptures, rather than to the simple facts of revelation? Christian fellowship, surely, is not the fellowship of a sect.

But we will not discuss a point which touches too much the denominational feeling which still lingers among us, and which checked the development of the Reformation, and has since contributed to the same result. We will rather notice some convincing reasons for believing that some errors have been admitted into our systems of religion.

There was no book ever written exactly like the Bible. Its meaning lies in detached parts; like the facts of science, scattered over nature. Its style, sometimes lucid, is often obscure. It frequently requires, as in the prophecies, a particular key for the interpretation of its language. Principles of interpretation, often very difficult to decide, and which can be attained originally only with much historical

* “Variations of the Protestant Churches.”

knowledge, must be known by all who would interpret every part of the Scriptures justly. Such a book, like religion in the Patriarchal and Jewish age, was evidently intended for the gradual development of its meaning; and such has certainly been its fate. This, with the necessity of separating its meaning from so many different connections, must render it liable to frequent misapprehensions; especially when its meaning is attempted by prejudiced and unqualified minds. Such a fact enhances, rather than otherwise, the character of the Bible as a revelation; but it renders it, like nature, the product of the same Author, very difficult of comprehension.

The dependence of religious studies upon clergymen, who are for the most part engaged in laborious parochial duties, has also exerted an unfavorable influence upon the development of scriptural truth. Popular preaching requires a culture of mind somewhat different from that which is demanded for original investigations; which require research, the sustained study of relations, and laborious adjustments, and the absence of passion, rather than its particular excitation. There is no resemblance between a popular sermon and a philosophical essay or treatise. But what is more, — for clergymen, like other men, have broken through the intellectual restraints which fettered them, — popular prejudice has often chilled and extinguished a disposition for original study. Plain minds feel a repugnance for what they regard as speculations in religion, and feel a strong opposition to innovations in opinions which they early imbibed, and which have grown into their religious history.*

* This persistence in early prejudices has been exhibited in some ludicrous examples; as in the expulsion of clergymen from a religious denomination for exchanging "The Psalms in Metre" for a collection better suited to the taste of this age, and in the wrath of a clergyman upon the admission into the choir of "a great ungodly fiddle."

Still, these causes have probably operated less than ecclesiastical power, and the usual mode of teaching divinity.

The idea of a theological education has been too generally comprised in a knowledge of systems of divinity. The Bible has often been, unintentionally no doubt, yet practically, a secondary authority, and a book of reference, rather than the only legitimate source of religious opinions. Such a conception of the nature of a theological education must have the effect of rendering students of divinity very frequently the disciples really of celebrated theologians, rather than of Christ. Indeed, if the theological instructor chiefly occupies the attention of his pupils with a *system* of divinity which is essentially involved with philosophical explanations, the source from which the young men preparing for the ministry must derive their opinions is at least dual, and is in part philosophy. If we add tradition — the source of some opinions in the religious world — we have Tradition, Reason, *and* the Bible, as the compound source of the religious doctrines of Christendom. It is impossible that errors should not grow from this dangerous compound. In time, a system of philosophical divinity would generate a monster as pernicious, perhaps, and as hideous, as Rome herself.*

* The first theological school in the world may be said to have been the celebrated catechetical school of Alexandria, in Egypt. It was the boast of this school that it explained the Scriptures by philosophy. Clemens, one of its greatest teachers, pronounced philosophy to be the basis of the Gospel, and regarded the Greek philosophers as having had a system as truly from God as was the religion of the Old Testament. This was a very wide departure, in a very short time, from the instructions of Paul, as expressed in his Epistles to the Corinthians and the Colossians; and the pupils of this school were certainly "spoiled through philosophy." That this school deeply infected the current of theology, as it began to depart from apostolic times, is well known; at least, is very

But several causes are *historically* known to have produced a misapprehension of the meaning of the Scriptures.

In the first place, Christianity was cast in a Jewish mould; and it bore away the impression of this cast in its future progress. Prelacy, in its proper character, was a form which the office of Christian instruction and edification

clearly shown in the history of the church. When we reflect upon the change which philosophy made of the scriptural doctrine of the origin of man, of the state of men when they die, and of the simple doctrine of Christ; and add the preëxistence of souls, purgatory, emanations, and other things, and ascetic practices, derived from the Platonic philosophy; we may readily judge of the corruptions which were brought about by the union of philosophy with Christianity, and brought about by this school. The Bible was explained, by the Alexandrine school, as a book of allegories; which the license of the interpreter, or fabulist, could make to teach anything to which his fancy inclined. The divine philosophy of Plato and Philo appeared everywhere in the Biblical visions of these interpreters. The Bible was little or nothing more than a sort of magical mirror, to present, in a hundred varying shapes, the Grecian wisdom, which Paul, in comparison with the Gospel, was taught, by the Holy Ghost, to view only with contempt. Clemens vindicated the study of philosophy, in this preposterous mode of interpreting the Scriptures, by the example of Abraham's union with Hagar before having a son by Sarah. We are taught by this example, he says, the importance of an indoctrination in philosophy before any valuable fruit can be produced from Christianity. The monstrous productions of such unions, like those of the unions of angels with the daughters of men, which Justin Martyr and Clemens could see in the narrative in Genesis, the Alexandrine school has very abundantly shown. Christian teachers, in short, who actually wore the cloak, as well as the doctrines, of philosophers, carried the Gospel to the Academy for its verification; and, not satisfied with the splendor of its truths, baptized it in the font of Paganism. This was unquestionably one of the most signal departures of Christian instruction from its original simplicity and purity; and its pagan baptism gave it one of the most marked characters of the Man of Sin.

We cannot, in condemning the union effected between philosophy and Christianity by the teachers of the second century, exonerate modern theological instructors altogether from blame for a similar cause. Christian teachers are now too much under the cloud of philosophy. To take

seems to have taken, though more harmlessly at its beginning, from this source; and its subsequent blending with the Roman flamen and pontifex completed the departure, and was a graft on the same stock.* It can make little difference, in itself, whether a bishop presides over an association of churches, or the pastor governs his own flock, or the congregation govern themselves. But Prelacy has

one example: We are taught, in the Gospel, that men are saved only on one principle — that of grace or faith. Faith, we are taught, is the only possible commencement of true religion. This great doctrine, however, is, in many of our schools of theology, associated with metaphysical discussions respecting the natural power of men in the operation of their wills; and it is thought to prove the dogma of a necessitated choice. Here two very different subjects have been confounded. The natural helplessness of men without the Gospel has been confounded with an imagined powerlessness which the microscopic vision of metaphysicians has discovered in the will, and which renders man a blind agent, or a passive link in an infinite chain of causes, and which renders obligation a mere barren distinction of terms. There is no relation whatever between these subjects. When men are taught the obligation to believe in Christ and to conform to the precepts of the Gospel, the subject can be urged with power upon the conscience, which needs no metaphysics to augment; and it produces an effect upon the lives of men which a mountain of metaphysics can never accomplish. But theology has not yet emerged from the cloud into which this metaphysical subject of the will has plunged the doctrine of regeneration. It should be added to the Litany of all Christians, and be a part of their daily fervent prayer, “From the error of confounding the speculations of man with the wisdom and life-giving words of the Holy Ghost, and from all metaphysics and all false philosophy, O Lord, deliver us!”

It is gratifying to know that there were some Christians in the second century who foresaw the consequences of the philosophical inclinations of so many religious teachers; and that the union of philosophy with religion was not accomplished without opposition. How far the vitality of religion, however, had declined, at that early time, is manifest from the fact that the philosophical teachers were not shamed out of their preposterous innovations.

* See Commentaries of Mosheim, Century II.

often manifested a character inconsistent with Christian simplicity and equality ; and the cause which produced it may reasonably be suspected to have produced other errors. One or two such errors will be seen in the course of this work.

But "Jewish fables" do not stand alone in the causes which changed the character of Christianity. The variations of opinion, in the first periods of the church, were much more numerous, and more important, than would be surmised by a reader only partially acquainted with ecclesiastical history. As many of these causes and their fruits have been continued to our own time, they must affect our judgment of the present state of the Christian religion.

There was a wild range of diversity existing even under the eyes of the apostles themselves, as we learn from the epistles ; one can scarcely expect, therefore, to find a perfection of Christian knowledge when inspiration ceased. The "Apostolical Fathers," so called, the immediate successors of the apostles, show an extraordinary union of truth and fable and tradition, and make it evident that Christian doctrine was not truly conceived at that time. They speak of the fabulous Egyptian phoenix as a reality, and seem to have regarded it as a proof of the resurrection. They received the most absurd fables respecting Abraham ; and tell us with great confidence — what they had not learned from the Scriptures — that the world would continue for seven thousand years ; a Jewish fable, which has been transmitted to our time. If we go to the Apocryphal Gospels, let the time of their composition have been what it may, we plunge deeper into the fables which were widely substituted in the church for Christianity ; and which probably show the under-current of that powerful stream which was ploughing in the channel marked out by

the Gospel. A popular belief in dragons, in changelings, and in witchcraft, which prevailed among our British and German ancestors, shows a similar perverse tendency of the human mind.*

The second century may be regarded as dignified, to a limited extent indeed, by a disposition to penetrate through the bewildering and preposterous cloud of opinions to the standpoints of the Gospel. Perhaps this character, however, more properly belongs to the two following centuries. Yet, this auspicious study of facts, when Christianity was nigh being lost in fable and tradition, was interrupted by several events, which resulted in submerging it in Reason and Asceticism; and when the elements of these corruptions had been prepared, the arm of power shut down the gate against the purifying influences of the Gospel; and the church took its flight into "the wilderness," until such time as it should please God to restore it again to the world.†

It would seem that no one could doubt, with these well-known facts before him, that the contents of the Gospel were very imperfectly settled up to the time of the Reformation. Nor can we be at a loss to perceive the effect of this admission upon the present state of Christian knowledge. For no less than six or seven still contested varieties of doctrine have come down to us, like the unfortunate legacy of a disputed estate, from the period of interrupted investigation; some of which possess nearly equal currency and

* Nothing shows more the importance of the exhortation, "Take heed what ye hear."

† The reader who wishes for further information upon this interesting subject may advantageously consult the Commentaries of the faithful Mosheim upon the State of Christianity during the Three First Centuries.

power, and divide the empire of the church among them. Calvinism and Arminianism have both been thus transmitted.* Arius has had, in modern times, however, few representatives, and Sabellius still fewer. The Nicene doctrine, or rather the doctrine which bears its name, has attained the prevalence. Some opinions respecting the Millennium and the second coming of Christ, and some relating to other subjects, have also been transmitted to our time.

The Gospel must be very imperfectly comprehended, and its facts must be capable of some new elucidation, when good and able men, as it would be absurd to dispute, have differed so widely upon all these subjects.† Especially, when we contemplate the *variety* of these differences, must we be impressed with the belief that Christian theology demands a thorough revision, and must repay every earnest laborer who makes the attempt. Indeed, whether discoveries in religion are practicable has been already settled by the fact that discoveries were made before the Reformation, and have been made, more or less, almost every generation since. We will call attention to one or two interesting facts upon this point.

* The historical reader does not need to be informed that the system or style of doctrine which now goes under the name of Calvin belongs really to a much earlier age; and that Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in the fourth century, is virtually its author. The doctrines called Arminian belong to as early an antiquity; and Pelagius, or Morgan, a British monk, and John Cassian, stand prominent among those who propagated sentiments of this nature.

† It would be impossible for any person to deny that the names both of good and great men have been attached to all these varieties of doctrine. It is sufficient to know that Whitefield was a Calvinist, Wesley an Arminian, Dr. Samuel Clark an Arian, and that multitudes of good and able men have professed the Nicene doctrine, and many that of the Premillennialists, to justify this observation.

Every one is familiar with the benefits of the Reformation itself ; and with the great doctrine which has produced them, and which Luther succeeded in raising from the forgetfulness in which it had lain for a thousand years. This great doctrine of Justification by Faith unfettered the mind from superstition and from church authority, and must ever produce these results wherever it is received.

But the Reformation of Luther was only one of a great series of reformations, and not the first in the series ; and it will appear an impressive fact to the reader, that no one of these reformations has been at any time effected *without some new development of scriptural truth*.

Wickliffe has been allowed, by some indeed reluctantly, the merit of a Christian reformer. He has been called the Morning Star of the Reformation. History will allow him an influence of the most powerful kind upon the religious sentiments of a great nation, and of a race at present the most powerful on the globe. Wickliffe's opinions, indeed, partook something of a political character, as falling in with the drift of popular feeling then existing throughout the civilized world. It was an age when the conviction of popular rights was taking its deep root among men, to put forth its strong and terrible arms in a future age. The French lawyers may have said before, what John Ball, the itinerant preacher, said, whose celebrated distich represents in some degree, though in doggerel, the spirit of Wickliffe's preaching : —

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was the fine gentleman ? ” *

* The French national documents of this age express the very spirit and language of our Declaration of Independence. “ According to the law of nature, each ought to be born free.” — Michelet's History of France, Book V. chap. 5.

But Wickliffe discovered the great doctrine of human rights, or rather of Christian liberty, in the Gospel. He acted powerfully with these ideas, mingled with some others, upon his own time; and his influence may be believed to have been felt in the freedom of religious opinion which exists in England, and in the liberties of this country, at the present time.

Whitefield and Wesley must also be admitted among reformers. Their great labors are now forcing themselves upon attention, as being among the greatest and most fruitful in historical events. Yet the beneficial effects of their labors did not start altogether in the line of existing ideas. Their reformation was not a reproduction of the religious spirit of the Commonwealth. It had much in common with it. But it was more rational, less speculative, and struck its roots deeper in the genius of the Gospel. It was eminently philanthropic; without sternness or fierceness. No man ever expressed the genuine spirit of Christian charity more than Mr. Whitefield; and Wesleyanism was a novel exposition of the Scriptures altogether, the justness of some of which is now very generally conceded, and some of the sterner features of Calvinism have melted away under the influence of this rising star. Whitefield, whose eloquence was unrivalled, did not theoretically depart from the Calvinistic standard of the day; but the spirit of his extraordinary labors and eloquence was not inspired by the chilling system which he professed.* The doctrine of the

* Calvinism has many phases, undoubtedly, to which this judgment will not apply. But it was the tendency of Calvinism, in its earlier forms, to put the salvation of men by the Gospel — considered as provided — not upon any voluntary conduct of their own connected with the providence and purpose of God, but upon a decree of election arbitrarily made. God could not indeed foresee any goodness, such as is the fruit of the Gospel,

New Testament, which excessive Calvinistic deductions had opposed, that the Gospel should be, and may be successfully, preached to all men, was illustrated, by both these

before faith is exercised. But various reasons, not inconsistent with the freeness of the Gospel offer, may have induced, and may still induce, God to have mercy upon those whom he draws to Christ. It was the representation of an arbitrary character, in effect, in the Divine decree, and an unnecessary confusing of the mind with the relations of the Divine foreknowledge and purpose with the conduct of men, even against the warnings of Calvin, which gave the stern and chilling character to the earlier forms of Calvinism. The doctrine that we are not tainted merely by the sin of Adam, but were corrupted in him in such a manner as to render us guilty, and proper subjects of punishment, not excepting infants, as taught by Calvin in his Institutes and Commentary on the Romans, contributed to the same result: the corruption of the human race, derived from Adam, and what may be called a governmental imputation, or the treatment of the whole race upon a representative principle, were explained in this exceptionable manner. Various metaphysical explanations of the atonement and of regeneration have had the same effect. Good men, indeed, saw in the sterner features of Calvinism an occasion for humbleness of mind and an evidence of the evil of sin — two valuable results of this system; and they modified its forbidding metaphysics with the touching affection displayed in the voluntary sacrifice of Christ. Still, however much a pious heart and an insight of the mercies of God may have modified much that belonged originally to the character of this scheme, the effect of its philosophy, whenever it was contemplated in its metaphysics, or in many of the principles upon which its systematic adjustments proceeded, was chilling and forbidding. The love of God — the unquestionably great cardinal doctrine of the Gospel — was nearly eclipsed by this philosophy, and appeared only as a feeble light in the midst of an awful gloom. The law, or a principle of justice, which in the Gospel serves only to enhance the benignity and grace of God in the provision and offer of salvation, was made to have a reversed effect, and to stand as the principal character of the Gospel.

It is not the intention of the author to argue any point of evangelical doctrine for or against any Christian denomination; but it is certainly not to be regretted that Arminianism has contributed to soften down much that was truly blamable in the Calvinistic scheme. Errors and weaknesses, frequently arising from vulgar prejudice, could, it is be-

eminent men, to a degree and with a power which had not been manifested since the apostolic age. A deeper insight into the freeness of the Gospel-offer, as associated with other evangelical ideas, was more effectually produced than had ever before existed perhaps in the world during its uninspired period.

These ideas have been since extended in this country. Whatever may be thought of the periodical excitements which were associated with the labors of Mr. Nettleton and of Mr. Finney, these eminent men — one of whom still survives to enjoy the honor of his successful exertions — operated upon the popular mind by means of great truths, which had been buried in the current theology of the time. The doctrine of man's obligation and ability, as taught by them respectively, though not perhaps without some errors, produced an enthusiasm in favor of evangelical religion which has been felt by all denominations. If the great truths thus effectually taught were not altogether new, they were sufficient to shake the public mind out of some of its apathy towards religion; and have powerfully contributed to give a more rational and effective character to the Calvinistic theology of this country. If one great religious denomination was severed in twain, as a result, yet, if the severed part preserves its popular character and its progressive adaptation to the wants of the world, the separation will afford no cause of regret.

In short, the great impulse and cause of all the marked religious reformations of the world have been some *new*

lied, be pointed out in what is popularly at least received as Arminianism; but it is not the purpose of the author to sit as a censor over the great and influential denominations which respectively bear the Calvinistic and Arminian character, nor to stand as an umpire between them. Love covereth a multitude of sins; and these schemes of doctrine must, in the nature of the case, modify each other.

development of the Word of God. Successively, as new exigences have arisen, the Gospel has been found to be provided with some power adequate to the occasion. Unless, therefore, some new instrument shall supersede the Gospel in the world as the power to purify and to save it, — unless it is to be hereafter only a conservative force, and unless we can suppose that the conflicting systems transmitted from the first ages of the Christian era are, all or any of them, the complete Gospel of Christ, — we must suspect that, ere the truth imbeds its great principles completely in the nature of man, the Gospel will reveal some new adaptations for human improvement. So it has been heretofore in the progress of mankind; and so we may presume that it will continue to be, until the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.

Even the Franciscans produced their temporary effects upon society by means of some small fragment of sacred fire struck from the Gospel. Zealots and imitators have frequently endeavored to make their mark upon the world in the production of some new religious movement, by means of singular devices and measures; often diluting some small portions of the Word of God, and accompanying them with coarse anecdote and jest, to the offence of good taste, and the substitution of enthusiasm for the genuine and rational spirit of religion. But the Word of God is the only instrument which can sustain any genuine religious progress; and it is, in its great compass and profound resources, beyond the reach of charlatans, if it may be effectively used by the pious and humble.

It will strengthen this argument, if we recollect, that the great and many-headed apostasy, in some respects so ambiguously predicted in the Scriptures, is to disappear under such means as *the Spirit of the Saviour's mouth, the*

Sword which goeth out of his mouth and the Brightness of his coming ; — expressions which it would seem difficult to mistake, as denoting anything else than the Gospel as the mighty instrument by which the strongholds of the world are to be pulled down.

Two facts, however, if any doubt remains, will completely settle the question whether any further discoveries may be made in the Scriptures; and may excite to new ardors in their discovery, and to a more exact and complete system of interpretation.

First: Paul several times intimates that truths exist in religion beyond the former or then existing experience of mankind, and even in some degree beyond his own. One declaration would be conclusive, if we could settle the interpretation of the passage at present: "We prophesy in part." — "Now I know in part." But he makes a remarkable intimation of this kind in the account of his vision, or rapture to heaven. (2 Cor. xii.) He heard, he informs us, "unspeakable words," which it was "not lawful for a man to utter." The idea which he meant to convey, by the unlawfulness or unutterableness of the subject, it is important to determine. The margin reads, for lawful, possible. And the original may undoubtedly be taken in this way; and the meaning may still further relate to the unfitness of the subject to be communicated at that time. Indeed, why should one man, while living in the world, have been favored with communications which it would not be proper to communicate more generally at any future time? It is not a question why God should think proper to conceal any portion of Divine knowledge, but why he should reveal to one man what he would perpetually withhold from the rest of mankind. The Saviour forbade that his Messiahship should be proclaimed; while he did not

intend that his advent as the Messiah should be perpetually unknown.

What the truths were, of which the apostle caught some discernment, we can conjecture only; and may do so, perhaps, with a good degree of conviction, from some obscure declarations to be found in his epistles. Upon two subjects the apostle speaks with great and with enthusiastic interest: the influence of the mission of Christ beyond this world, and his second coming into the world. Upon these subjects he speaks only in a detached manner, and in an obscure style; and upon the latter of them with evident embarrassment, and with some apparent discrepancy. He speaks of these subjects as mysterious to himself: "Behold I show you a mystery." (1 Cor. xv. 51; Eph. i. 9, 10.) It does not by any means follow, however, because these subjects were obscure to the apostle,—if they were, and he certainly does not fully reveal them,—that they will be so to all succeeding times. Inspired men, we are particularly informed, did not always comprehend the messages which they delivered (1 Peter i. 10—12); and no subject in the New Testament is probably more obscure than was the doctrine of Christ to the prophets and the church under the old dispensation. It has been a general error to conceive that there is nothing parallel to this mystery in the New Testament.

But a still more impressive case is found in the Revelations. John speaks of events, in the allegorical style of that book, under the image of the descent of an angel from heaven, whose mission was to announce and prepare the complete establishment of the Kingdom of God—the foundation of the well-established popular expectation of the conversion of the world, or, as it is expressed in this passage, the conclusion of the mystery of God, as had been

declared to his servants the prophets. (Rev. x.) This angel, or messenger, is represented as holding a little open book in his hands. This would be a very suitable symbol of the communication of new truths; and the smallness of the volume, together with its being *open*, seems not less fitly to denote an exposition of truths previously revealed; and in this allegorical book an angel is a proper symbol of such events. This angel is further distinguished by the symbol of the sun and the rainbow. These are very luminous veils; and through their transparency we seem readily to distinguish *a period* of religious communications, relating to the mercies or the covenant of God, respecting the church, — which the rainbow seems clearly to symbolize in this book. The angel is also, in striking confirmation of these observations, represented as delivering a message from his book. The effects which it produces are specially represented as like the sudden bursting of repeated thunder: seven utterances of this description are mentioned. This mode of speaking is obviously well adapted to express the effects of surprising religious announcements. The announcements of Luther operated upon the world like thunder, and with all the force of the Divine voice in the heavens. Perhaps, in the age of Wickliffe, and in the Reformation, we have the two first utterances of the angel. It may be further observed that the mission of this symbolical angel strikingly concurs with the declaration of Paul, that the man of sin would be destroyed by the brightness of the Saviour's coming. Both representations relate to the same events. Both passages, therefore, seem to teach that the anti-Christian powers of the world will be destroyed by some new forces of the Word of God. It would be indeed strange, if the familiar doctrines of Christianity, nearly every one of which have been held by the

Church of Rome, and in fact derived through it, should be used for the destruction of this great power ; — and great at present, great in its agreement with an unsubdued and almost universal disposition of the human heart to substitute devotion and works for the genuine spirit of religion. It may well be hoped that some virgin truths of Christianity, more unknown to “fathers” and “councils” than Justification by Faith, have been spared the corruption into which the great Christian apostasy has dragged down so much of the Word of God.

But the production of new truths is the most effectual evidence that discoveries are practicable in the Word of God. Such proof will be set before the reader.

PLAN OF THE CREATION.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN AND STATE OF THE QUESTION.

A Sceptical Objection. — A Real Difficulty. — Answers of Fuller and Chalmers. — Effect of the Discussion to widen the Range of the Problem. — Hypothesis of Chalmers objectionable. — Hypothesis that other Beings in other Worlds have not fallen ; — its Difficulties. — The Problem unsolved ; — its Magnitude ; — the Importance of solving it. — The Solution attainable. — Misstatement of the Case. — An Inquiry into the Extent and Present Condition of the Universe.

SEVERAL of the physical sciences have had, in their birth, the singular fortune to furnish alluring materials for an assault upon revelation ; and afterwards to become, as was scarcely to have been expected, very powerful auxiliaries in its defence. When astronomy became popularized, some sceptics endeavored to fix upon Christianity the stigma that it represented the Creator as restricting his principal care to mankind ; and as providing, in this design, an extraordinary sacrifice — in itself staggering reason — in which no other races of intelligent beings had any share. Christianity was confidently pronounced, on this account, to be a scheme manifestly too narrow to correspond with the known extent of the creation.

Infidelity has in this case undesignedly furnished a valuable truth in support of Christianity. It must be admitted that, if the Bible represents the Creator as confining his principal attention to mankind, as it seems to

do, the case is inexplicable, if we must, at the same time, contemplate the worlds above us, and their inhabitants, in a light of superior importance and excellence. It is quite possible, therefore, that some misconception has entered into the statement of the question. We will, however, before searching for the error in this case, notice the condition of the inquiry at present.

The formidable objection referred to called out two rare defenders of revelation; one of whom united remarkable penetration of mind with singular powers of disputation, and the other possessed a species of eloquence unique and powerful in its kind. Andrew Fuller, whose general expositions of the way of salvation are so justly esteemed, drew from the Bible convincing proof that Christianity does not expose its own weakness in the case in hand; since it does not represent itself as a scheme so narrow as to be only a religion for this world; for, on the contrary, the entire creation is very clearly represented as sharing in the benefits of redemption.* Mr. Fuller produced a fact entirely competent to neutralize at least the force of this objection. Dr. Chalmers, on the other hand, more popularly known in the argument, adorned the subject, so powerfully argued by this great disputant, with his peculiar powers of illustration; venturing at the same time upon the very bold hypothesis, very ingeniously urged, that the distant places of the creation might have become involved also in an apostasy; and offering some impressive considerations upon the consistency of an attention to the minute affairs of the creation, with its general supervision.

It must be admitted, however, upon a review of this argument, that the attention given by Christian writers to

* "The Gospel its own Witness."

the subject has not divested the case of all difficulty ; but has rather served to call the attention of religious minds to a subject involved in several respects, in the present way of viewing it, in very great obscurity. If Mr. Fuller has shown, by a very satisfactory citation of passages, that the influence of redemption extends, as a matter of fact, as far as the creation, however great it may be ; still, the *nature* of this influence remains unresolved, — or how and why the affairs of the world exert so great an influence in the system of the Creator.

If, for the present, we take the hypothesis of Chalmers, that other worlds have fallen and need redemption, we must be impressed, like Mr. Foster,* with the very gloomy conception which it sets before us of the Divine economy, which can admit and is incapable of preventing the miseries of a general diffusion of moral evil. It is also an objection to this hypothesis, that we have very sure scriptural evidence that the atonement, as such, does not apply to the only other race of intelligent beings revealed as created besides men ; nor have we the slightest intimation that the principle of redemption may extend in any degree beyond this world or mankind. Mr. Fuller also has provided means, as will be hereafter shown, to set aside this hypothesis, by showing that *the whole creation* is actually represented as serving some purpose in facilitating the design of the work of Christ begun on earth ; while the church is represented as in some manner increasing the happiness of the whole creation : — a paradox unexplained, but which will be found, it is believed, capable of elucidation.

If, then, we take the only other practicable hypothesis — admitting the existence of a plurality of inhabited worlds —

* Miscellaneous Essays of John Foster.

that no other worlds have fallen besides those revealed as having done so, we are not furnished with a clearer discernment of the influence of the atonement upon other beings. For, if it is not a scheme for their recovery, nor an important instrument for their preservation,—as it cannot be, since they must, upon the hypothesis, have long existed without a knowledge of it,—in what manner can its influence be exerted, corresponding with the extraordinary interest which it is represented as universally exciting? It would seem, that being in its nature adjusted to a state of sin, its example of lenity would be both hazardous and needless to beings who had not experienced temptation, and who already possessed the example of angels hopelessly fallen before them.

But this hypothesis presents a still more formidable difficulty. The existence of sin has been admitted, by those who do not jest at its nature, to be the most formidable subject which offers itself among the objects of our attention. If its existence is at all strange and perplexing, how much more so does it become when we conceive of two races, angelic and human, as alone in any degree experiencing this great calamity! If all other beings, to whose numbers the human race with angels bear only an inconsiderable proportion, have been entirely preserved in innocence, why should two races have been suffered to fall? It could not have been, upon this hypothesis, from a want of power to prevent it. The lot of man, especially, appears, therefore, to be a peculiar and inexplicable hardship, when viewed in this light.

It is obvious, therefore, that there has been no decisive solution of the problem which the sceptical objection offers; nor does any answer seem to be practicable within the range of thought in which the solution has been attempted. No

difficulty, however, was ever made a source of sceptical opposition of half such formidable magnitude.* We have had an example, in one of the most illustrious statesmen of America, of the manner in which the subject—or, the mysterious nature of the atonement as it stands related with the extent of the universe—affects minds very free from any sceptical disposition.†

It is certainly desirable, in the highest degree, to clear up this subject by any new lights which the progress of knowledge will permit. It will be the object of these pages to pursue the subject, with such aids as the providence of God has furnished. And it is hoped that it will not be deemed presumptuous to state that new light will be cast upon it from this source. A method of inquiry will be pursued which affords the only hope of reaching the result.

We will, in the first place, consider a misstatement of the difficulty, by an inquiry into the extent and present condition of the universe.

* Mr. Foster was led to accept Origen's doctrine of the final restoration of the lost, on this account: a benevolent hypothesis, in a case for which we hope there is a better solution, and one less repugnant to the Scriptures. — See Foster's Letter.

† Dying Observations of Daniel Webster: " ' Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Philosophical argument, especially that drawn from the vastness of the universe in comparison with the apparent insignificance of this globe, has sometimes shaken my reason for the faith which is in me; but my heart has always assured and reassured me that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be a divine reality. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a merely human production. This belief enters into the very depth of my conscience. The whole history of man proves it."

CHAPTER II.

PLURALITY OF WORLDS: OR, THE PROVINCE OF ASTRONOMY AND THE PROVINCE OF REVELATION.

The Science of Astronomy associated with a Conjecture. — Question whether the Universe was designed to be Inhabited. — Whether it is generally Inhabited at Present. — Complicated Nature of this Question. — Not within the Domain of Natural Science. — How it can be Answered. — To be Answered Negatively. — Competency of Theology to Determine this Question in all its Extent. — Notice of an Objection to a Plurality of Worlds from the Relation which the Celestial Bodies appear to sustain to the Earth in the Account in Genesis. — Strictures upon an Hypothesis of Sir David Brewster in regard to the Condition of the Universe.

It cannot be said that the splendid and “exact” science of astronomy has been disconnected with some dreams of the imagination. Its dominion in “the empyrean” has not saved it altogether from the infirmities which attach to this mundane sphere. It is indeed remarkable that the most brilliant period of astronomical discoveries should have been so soon connected with a conjecture which became immediately recognized as a fact by professor and peasant; and which has furnished, as such, materials for religious opinions and discussions of considerable magnitude and of some variety. We refer to the doctrine that thousands or countless multitudes of worlds are inhabited, besides this planet,

by intelligent beings. The confidence with which this popular doctrine has been generally maintained is rather unfortunate,* although it has added some splendor to the brilliant science of astronomy and to religious hypothesis; since, when we come to search for the basis upon which it rests, it will be found to be altogether a visionary matter.

There is certainly a wide distinction to be made between the questions whether the universe was *designed* to be inhabited and whether it *is* so at present. A distinction between these questions would have saved much error.

Upon the first of these questions we do not deem it necessary to undertake a particular discussion, since the facts which will ultimately be presented will effectually settle it; and the question would remain undetermined, in a measure, with the assistance of astronomy and of mere analogy only. It has been justly observed, however, by Sir David Brewster,† that it would seem that no one who believes in an intelligent Creator could seriously doubt that the universe was designed to support an intelligent population. Absolute evidence from astronomy there is indeed none; but something more nearly approaching to absolute evidence can be obtained from revelation. Still, the hypothesis that the system of nature was intended generally to support an intelligent population, is the only explanation of its design which is plausible, or which is likely to meet with the smallest favor. Indeed, it stands alone, as the only hypothesis which the extent and magnitude and the analogies of the creation appear to allow. It is therefore unnecessary to pursue an argument in its support, until some other hypothesis of superior merit, — which seems to be inconceivable, — or indeed any plausible hypothesis at all, is offered in its stead.

* Andrew Fuller expressed his doubts upon this conjecture.

† “More Worlds than One.”

There is no evidence whatever against its truth, as a vigorous effort to produce something of the kind has very satisfactorily shown.* Variety in the arrangement of the creation is no evidence that the universe was not intended for inhabitants, unless we know that this variety is incompatible with such a design. There may be binary and still more numerous associations of stars, and two suns may enlighten the same earth, and still this design be preserved and highly favored. The allegation that we have no evidence that a single star is associated with a habitable world is trivial; since our own sun would appear to be unattended with its family of planets, if it should be observed from any position at the distance at which any of the fixed stars are supposed to be placed from us. And the hypothesis that the creation was intended for inhabitants is not dependent upon the general arrangement into suns and planets, since the varieties of life which the Creator may produce are at present entirely beyond even the reach of conjecture. There are bodies "celestial," and there are bodies "terrestrial."

But the question whether the universe is in fact generally inhabited, and by what beings it may be, is quite a different subject, and involves particular questions for which astronomy can furnish no answers. It connects itself with the subject of the age of the creation, with its fitness for inhabitants, and with the moral economy of the Creator. Such questions, for the most part, do not belong to the province of the astronomer, since they must be determined, in the want of observation, by principles involved in the problem of the moral designs of the Creator. The geologist cannot determine anything respecting the physical constitution of other worlds. The zoologist would not be

* "Plurality of Worlds."

able, with the resources of his interesting department of science, to make out from analogy the existence even of an inferior animal creation in the worlds of space; and theology, as we think will be made plain, is competent to show that the animals of the earth, whether used as food or to assist the labors of man, or viewed in the examples of low and debased passions and of virtues which they offer, belong purely to an initiatory period of human existence. The conditions, in fact, upon which a judgment can be formed respecting the present use or occupation of the creation, lie more within the domain of theology than of any other science.

Theology is fully competent to pronounce against the probability that the universe is generally inhabited. The supposition of there being intelligent inhabitants in other worlds, involves them at once in all the high responsibilities and in the fearful hazards of moral beings. If we suppose that all other worlds are inhabited by *fallen* or *sinful beings*, we have the hopeless problem to solve, how sin and misery can be universal in the government of God. It is hard to conceive that Infinite Wisdom should or could originate no better plan than such as would fill the universe with sinful and miserable beings, many of whom could never escape from a condition of wretchedness except by their extinction. A superior plan is conceivable, and has been practicable. And if, on the other hand, we conceive that no other beings have fallen besides those known actually to have done so, we have the still greater difficulty to meet, affecting not only the wisdom but also the justice of God, — why, if it was possible to preserve all other worlds in a state of innocence, two races of beings, men and angels, should have been suffered to fall into sin.

Theology, therefore, presents objections altogether in-

superable to the belief that the popular doctrine of millions of inhabited worlds is true. That it can go further than this, and is capable of deciding the question as fully as astronomy can decide upon the existence and application of the law of gravitation, will be shown in the next chapter, and in the succeeding portions of this work.

One other observation only seems to be demanded at the present point. It may be objected to the idea of a plurality of worlds, that the Bible represents the sun and moon, and seemingly the stars also, as intended solely for the use of this world and for man. It would too much anticipate the results to which this work will be brought, and indeed would be impracticable at present, to answer this objection now. It is believed, however, that we may take the biblical statement in a more literal manner than is usually done; that the heavenly worlds were designed principally for the very use denoted at the time when the record was made; and that it was not only proper, but highly truthful, to represent their design in this way. The statement is nevertheless in entire consistency with the existence of a plurality of worlds. This singular paradox will be perfectly explained when we reach the result. The statement in Genesis is precisely like the first promise, as recorded in the same book, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" in which a great truth was proclaimed in a seemingly partial and certainly very obscure manner.

REMARK. — An observation may be offered, at the conclusion of this chapter, upon the remarkable reply to an equally remarkable book — "Plurality of Worlds" — by Sir David Brewster, in a work of his entitled "More Worlds than One." It is said, in this reply, not to be impossible that, during the process of the formation of the

world for the residence of man, intelligent beings may have lived upon the earth. It is observed that the geologist may ultimately discover, beneath the primitive azoic formations, the remains of beings "more lovely, more pure, more divine, than man." If this world has gone through its series of transformations, such as are here indicated, like an insect, the processes have gone unfortunately upon a scale of debasement, and the moral and physical scales have been reversed; for a sinful race now dwell upon the earth, and this when the earth is the most perfected, as a pure race must have occupied it when it was least so. But this strange hypothesis is stretched, in the conception that the whole universe has experienced a succession of inhabitants. The question must naturally occur, therefore, what disposition has been made of these numerous beings; for the physical universe, subject everywhere to such successions, must be too narrow for their reception. Perhaps some of them have perished forever; and the pure beings, whose remains may be found in the earth, not unlikely perished or died in some of those extraordinary convulsions to which the earth was subject during the earlier periods of its formation. And what must we think of the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator, if death and misery are universal; and if beings better than man are or were liable to be swallowed up in streams of lava, to be borne away with floods, or destroyed with sub-terrene gases? It is but a melancholy theology which can represent the Creator as giving birth to desolation and misery over the wide extent of nature; and the problem of evil, sufficiently dreadful in the ordinary ways of viewing the subject, is deepened by such a conception. The author of "Plurality of Worlds" may be thanked for theoretically blotting out a creation so theoretically conceived as filled with horrors; or for turning

it, all except the earth and its supporters, into a jest, as chiefly "flakes of fire struck off in the formation of the solar system," and now, it may be, "really long since extinct." Religion gains nothing by an extravagant zeal for its defence; nor have men who have displayed great eminence in the physical sciences—as has been illustrated by both these authors—always exhibited the qualifications necessary to deal with the theories of religion. Religion is a science, and demands, like other sciences, a professional study. A peasant may sometimes enlighten an astronomer, and the profound studies of religion may sometimes be promoted by men in the common departments of life; but at the same time it will be admitted that there is one province for the astronomer, or for the man of physical science, and another province for the theologian.

CHAPTER III.

INFANCY OF THE CREATION.

Probability that the Moral System of the Creation is struggling through the Difficulties attending its Commencement. — This Conjecture capable of being demonstrated as a Fact. — Supposed want of Facts to settle the Question respecting the Present Condition of the Universe. — Scriptural Testimony abundant. — Relative Age of the Creation. — The Celestial Bodies not older than the Earth. — A Particular Examination of the Narrative of the Creation as relating to this Subject. — A Remarkable Declaration in this Narrative. — The actual Creation of Nature. — Man not preceded in Existence by any other Beings except Angels. — The Earth first Created, or fitted for Inhabitants before any other part of Nature. — Remarkable Confirmation of this Fact in the Book of Proverbs. — Importance of the World in the Plan of the Creation. — Two Familiar Statements in the Scriptures throw great Light upon this Subject. — The whole Universe in its Comparative Infancy; and the Distant Parts of the Creation more so than the Present. — Geological Analogy. — Impressiveness of the Fact of the Infancy of the Creation. — A Question Developed, to be particularly considered.

THE present moral condition of the universe, in the entire extent revealed, suggests, since sin is so widely spread, the likelihood that the moral system of the creation is struggling through the difficulties attending its commencement.

Since, however, it is desirable to support the investigations of this treatise upon a principle superior to hypothesis, however plausible, we will give our attention to such other

facts, bearing upon this deeply interesting point, as will bring their own conclusions.

The prepossession will undoubtedly exist in some, perhaps in most minds, that we possess no means of ascertaining the present condition of the universe beyond our own planet; that the theologian can help us only with dubious theories upon the interesting questions as to its being inhabited, or as to the plan upon which the populating of its worlds depends. We shall not endeavor to procure a favorable hearing by desiring the reader to lay aside this natural prepossession, which will be sure to fall under the weight of testimony, cumulative in its character, which will be produced upon this subject. Our demand is only that of attention to the evidence. This evidence will be derived altogether from the Scriptures, which possess a very extensive series of facts relating to this case. The Bible gives the age of the creation, with very clear indications both of its present condition and of its future uses.

First: the Scriptures do not admit any great comparative antiquity of any part of the universe. They represent the creation as produced at the same general period. Second: a priority, or preëminence of some kind, is given to the earth in the creation.

It cannot be doubted that the account of the creation which we have in Genesis embraces the entire system of nature. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* The expression "in the beginning" is in itself sufficiently indefinite to admit of its including very wide and numerous intervals of time. But the expression denotes a *commencement*. The heavens and the earth are included in the same idea: when they were made, the

* Gen. i. 1, with verses 14-17.

whole creation rose into being together. The statement, however, may relate, in an exclusive manner, to what may be called the rudimental production of nature.

Yet, if the account given of the fourth day, in which the production of the celestial bodies is first particularly mentioned, is altogether literal, the earth was first created in the entire system of nature. Before, however, a satisfactory decision can be formed respecting the relative age of any part of the creation, it will be necessary to attend a little to the narrative; and particularly to two questions: first, whether the statement, commencing the account, that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," is to be considered as an explanatory *title*, or as a proper part of the narrative; second, whether a true order of succession is intended in the record of the events. If the first verse is to be viewed as a title, then, as the production of the celestial bodies is first mentioned when the account of the fourth day is given, they were made then, and *subsequently* to the creation of the world; but, if it is strictly a part of the narrative, their actual creation upon the fourth day cannot be intended. Again: if the true order of succession is preserved in the accounts of these events, the celestial bodies were created, or their light imparted to them, on the fourth day; unless the mention of the stars is to be considered as offering an exception, and as being only incidentally made.

That a proper order of succession is intended in the narrative of the creation, cannot be seriously doubted, except as relates to the first verse, and to the mention of the stars in the sixteenth. In all other parts, the account preserves such an order as must have occurred, if man is the head of the creation, and dependent upon a complete arrangement and furnishing of the earth; and if light and vegetation are

necessary for the support of the animal races. The division of the acts of the creation into six periods may have been principally intended to impress upon mankind the obligation of six days of labor, and of one of rest, chiefly for the purpose of religious culture. But the succession itself cannot have been designed for such a cause. It was undoubtedly the true succession, as it is natural that light should precede the existence of organized beings, and that animal life should succeed the vegetable.

As to the other question, upon which a correct judgment of the relative age of the creation must mainly depend, — that the first verse is to be taken as an explanatory title, may be believed for the following reason: that the creation of “heaven,” by which is undoubtedly meant an expansion of indefinite extent, is subsequently mentioned, — “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God called the firmament *heaven*; and the evening and the morning were the second day.” (Vs. 6–8.) If the firmament is represented here, and elsewhere (Ps. cxlviii 4), as dividing the waters from the waters, yet this is only one part of its office, since the sun and moon are represented as placed *in* it; and the word “heaven” in the original is in the plural both in this part of the narrative and in the first verse, and doubtless expresses a plural sense: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them *in* the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the

earth." (Vs. 14-17.) It is obvious, therefore, that what we often denote as the heavens, or the heavenly space, inclusive or exclusive of its objects, must be regarded as produced on the second day.

The mention of the creation of space is not singular, if space is a substance, as the older philosophers thought. It must in this case have been created, and might have been created then. And if space is simply a relation of distance, it was first brought into being when two objects were placed apart from each other, as was signally done when the waters below the firmament were separated from the waters above its most visible portion.

Still, we know little respecting the full explanation of this remarkable expansion or firmament, in which the celestial bodies, as well as the clouds or waters of heaven, were put. A literal and substantial expansion may be extended to the limits of planets and stars, or to the utmost bounds of nature itself.* It is indeed said that light was created upon the first day, before the existence of the firmament. But the doctrine that light is conveyed to us, or the sensation is produced, by the movement of a subtile ether, is a theory which may in turn yield to some other, like the doctrine of material particles which it has so far supplanted.†

* It is well known that the existence of an ethereal medium has long been suspected and believed by astronomers. This explanation, given by Professor Encke, of the approach of the comet, called by his name, to the sun, betokening that its fate must be to fall ultimately into that body, has received the approbation of Sir John F. W. Herschell, and of other eminent astronomers. Nor can we fail to see how this explanation agrees with the scriptural narrative.

† If the sensation of light is produced through the waves of a subtile ether, they cannot be the sole cause of it. Something must move them; and whatever it is, it is that great enlightening and chemical agent which acts so powerfully upon the organic life and upon the inorganic

We have, it is probable, attained to a very imperfect knowledge either of the air we breathe, or of the expanse in which the heavenly bodies revolve, or of what is altogether meant by "the waters above the firmament." Other developments still may come out of this remarkable subject.*

It is not incompatible with receiving the first verse in Genesis as a title, to regard it as containing a general statement that an original creation had taken place. It may be an explanatory title exactly of this character. Without it, some doubt might have been felt whether the account of the creation, or the whole narrative, did not recite only an arrangement of matter from preëxisting materials; but there could be none whatever as to the whole extent of nature having been altogether strictly *created*, with the statement in this verse. The expression "in the beginning" denotes, as clearly as any primitive language could be expected to do, the commencement or origination of nature. It is not liable to the same objection as the not very felicitous expression current at present, "made out of nothing." (Compare Heb. xi. 3.) The language "or ever the earth was," found in Proverbs, is of the same kind as that in Genesis, and denotes a literal creation.†

matter of our planet, which we call light. This was produced before the firmament.

" Whose fountain who shall tell ? Before the sun,
Before the heavens, thou wert."

* See some interesting remarks of Ex-President Hitchcock, perhaps not entirely imaginary.

† The mind seems ceaselessly to revert to the question whether the creation was made from materials always existing. But the Scriptures everywhere teach or imply that God is a being whose dominion and power are absolute or unlimited. This could not be the case, if the essence of matter always existed. To suppose that anything which may be called matter is a part of God, is a species of Pantheism, and is certainly not intelligible or reconcilable with the Scriptures. Why God could not have brought

The anticipative mention of the heavens in the narrative may have been chiefly intended, therefore, to state the fact

the universe into existence when no matter previously existed, does not appear from any philosophical principle, and certainly not from the Scriptures, which give us to understand that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. That nature, deriving its existence from God, does not exist apart from him, however, is perfectly plain; since an absolutely derived existence cannot be entirely independent. We are said to live and move and have our being in God. This is very different from the admission that the essence of matter always existed. The fact that God fills heaven and earth, or pervades all things, — in other words, that nature does not exist out of God, — should, it would seem, satisfy the mind as to the reality and extent of the creating act of God. If, however, the existence of nature depends on God, it does not follow that nature or matter was made out of the substance of God. A great many metaphysical difficulties are verbal, rather than matters of fact. The discussions respecting the possibility of a creation seem all to have arisen from a confusion of mind upon such an expression as “made out of nothing.” The first action of the mind, when reflecting upon the origin of nature, supposing it to be derived, is that nothing material, in such a case, must have preceded it. Hence the expression “made out of nothing.” But the scriptural idea of creation involves no absurdity whatever; for there is no absurdity in supposing that something was produced by the act of God which had not existed. The conception conveyed in the Scriptures that God called the world into being by his word, or by uttering a command, seems intended to convey to our minds the idea of an absolute creation.

A remarkable passage, indeed, exists in the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 3), whose meaning appears to have been generally overlooked. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Our English translation “framed” may mislead us, as denoting the idea of making; since the original means to arrange or adjust. This changes the sense very materially, and makes the meaning of the verse to be, that God arranged the worlds, or set them in order, from pre-existing materials, but different from those which now appear. This is in agreement with the explanation given of the first verse of Genesis, and is probably — being addressed to Hebrew Christians well versed in the Jewish history — an explanation of it, namely, that the matter of the creation was first made, and that the particular modification of these materials succeeded.

of the origination of all nature. It might be considered an objection to this explanation, that the creation of the earth is not subsequently mentioned or repeated in the narrative. But there was not the same reason for repeating the notice of the creation of the earth as there was for noticing again the creation of the heavens; since the celestial bodies perform an important service to the earth, and it was proper to mention them when their service in the order of the narrative and of the succession of the events demanded attention.

If this explanation of the scriptural account is just, then the earth was created before any other portion of nature, and is the elder part of the creation. Man is not likely, therefore, to have been preceded in existence by any created moral beings, except those more purely spiritual intelligences called angels, who are represented as created before him.

But, if any doubt should be felt in regard to this exposition, the case is not essentially altered by regarding the first verse of the record as a proper part of the narrative, since the whole creation was made in the beginning, and no part can claim a greater antiquity than the earth. The order of precedence in which heaven is mentioned would decide nothing for the priority of its existence; since it may be put first from the dignity of its associations, as being the residence of God and angels, and from the impressiveness arising from the mysterious character which it had in the early ages of mankind. And it is very plain that, at whatever time the rest of the creation may have been made, it could not have had any light until the first day of the creation of the world, nor any suns until the fourth; that is, if we are to take the language in its natural import. The account to have any consistency, if we follow the natural

sense, must have this meaning. If it should be supposed that the creation of the stars is only incidentally mentioned in the account of the fourth day, and yet for no good reason, it must at least be true that all the planets of our solar system had no sun until that time; since no language can be stronger than that which seems to denote the creation of the sun and moon at that time, — considered at least as luminaries, — and indeed of the whole celestial arrangement. “And God said, Let there *be* lights in the firmament of the heaven. And God *made** two great lights; he made the stars also; and God *set them* in the firmament of *the heaven to give light upon the earth.*” This language entirely forbids the supposition made in deference to an unreal astronomical necessity, that Moses speaks of the *appearance* of the celestial bodies at this epoch of the creation, as though their light, having existed for millions of years *before* the creation of the world, shone then through the misty atmosphere of the earth for the first time. To whom, indeed, did this appearance exist before man had any existence, or there were any spectators on the earth? The exposition of this narrative has been degraded of its dignity, and even deprived of its truthfulness, by adjusting it to philosophical hypotheses conceived from an imperfect acquaintance with nature. Science may have her facts; but the Word of God will still be superior to any human explanations of them. No philosophy could ever teach us that the world was strictly created, rather than *reformed*. A variety of astronomical hypotheses have already passed away, while the scriptural record still remains an enduring monument of truth, and the surest source of our knowledge

* The significance of the two words used in the original to express the act of the creation seems to depend altogether upon their connection.

respecting the creation. If the account, then, is to be received at all, it must be regarded as teaching either that the celestial bodies were made upon the fourth day of the creation, or else at least that their luminous powers were imparted to them at that time. It is plain also that the whole planetary system could not have had any sun until it was made for the earth; and if so much of the universe as is embraced by the planets of our solar system was not fitted up for inhabitants before the earth, there is at least no reason for believing that the rest of the creation was more favored. Indeed, we should be barred such belief by the statement that the whole system of nature was made at the same time. Either the creation or the fitting up of the earth, therefore, — and it is indifferent which, — was prior to the creation or the fitting of the rest of nature; and this remarkable fact will be found to be in exact agreement with other facts which will be noticed.

In the book of Job it is said that the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, when the earth was rising from its foundations. But “morning stars” — if the language is not tropical, as the singing certainly is, if any celestial bodies are meant — limits the case to the planets; and, besides, nothing implies that the stars and planets did not come into being with the earth, or at the same general time, or even that the earth did not have an actual priority of existence, and, above all, was not first completed.* (Job xxxviii. 7.)

It might also be alleged, — to notice a further objection, —

* There are many prophetic passages in the Bible, couched in figurative language, which the development of the purpose of God can only explain. The morning stars may be represented as singing or rejoicing together, in view of a dependence upon the earth, which will be explained in the course of these pages.

that the principal purpose of the narrative of the creation was to give an account of the earth. This is indeed believed to be the fact; but for a very different reason from that for which the objection would be urged. It certainly was not intended to give an account of the earth, leaving us wholly uncertain as to the state of the other parts of the creation; since the prior origin or furnishing of the earth denotes the rest of the creation as being less advanced than the world. Nor does the account chiefly occupy itself with the world simply because it was to be the residence of man, for whose good the revelation of the Scriptures was intended; since the fact that the world occupied earliest the particular attention of the Creator seems to mark it out as holding a place of peculiar importance in the creation. This inference, however, is a matter of direct statement in another part of the Scriptures, which we will immediately consider.*

In the personification of wisdom, in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, the writer, after mentioning the part which Wisdom took in the entire creation, represents this personified character as concentrating its attention upon the world. Wisdom, while the whole creation is spread before her, expresses herself as having her delights with the human race, and with the earth, as intended to be inhabited by them. This interesting passage deserves particular attention :

“ The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.

* There is no reason for believing that the creation, in the wide sense of this expression, was entirely suspended at the Mosaic creation. The earth is undergoing changes, which, if they proceed for a long succession of ages, must change both the appearance and the physical character of our planet; and the Saviour spoke of going to *prepare* a place for his disciples. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

I was set up from everlasting,
 From the beginning, or ever the earth was.
 When there were no depths, I was brought forth ;
 When there were no fountains abounding with water.
 Before the mountains were settled,
 Before the hills, was I brought forth ;
 While as yet he had not made the earth,
 Nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
 When he prepared the heavens, I was there ;
 When he set a compass upon the face of the depth ;
 When he established the clouds above ;
 When he strengthened the fountains of the deep ;
 When he gave to the sea his decree
 That the waters should not pass his commandment ;
 When he appointed the foundations of the earth ;
 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him :
 And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him,
Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ;
And my delights were with the sons of men."

(Vs. 22-31.)

Now, it is indifferent according to which of the two modes of interpretation we take this interesting passage, — as denoting the Son of God, or as simply intending a personification of Divine Wisdom. In either case, the Divine Wisdom, or the Saviour, is represented as more interested with the world than with the rest of the creation. This is not a careless or unmeaning statement, to be passed by with little attention, or as a poetic rhapsody, which in fact means nothing beyond its expression of feeling. The passage is a declaration, strongly and beautifully made, that the world, with all the sin and misery existing upon it, holds a central, in short, the most important place in the creation. This well accords, as must be obvious, with the extraordinary provisions made for the salvation of mankind, and with the constant exertions of Divine Providence to reclaim and elevate them.

But this remarkable passage very explicitly represents

the world as first produced in the creation. When wisdom endeavors to express the idea of her antiquity, or eternity, she speaks of herself as existing before the world.

“The Lord possessed me *in the beginning of his way,*
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning, or *ever the earth was.*”

The declaration of existing before the earth is equivalent, therefore, to being eternal; and this mode of denoting eternity is applied to God in the Psalms.

“Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

(Ps. xc. 2.)

If this Psalm was written by Moses, to whom it is attributed, it is all the more significant. Besides, in this address of wisdom, the heavens are mentioned in an order succeeding the earth. (Verse 27.)

These remarkable declarations would be in the highest degree mysterious, if the Scriptures did not cast further light upon this interesting subject. As we have seen, however, we have already taken two steps: we have shown that *we are entirely destitute of astronomical evidence that the material universe contains an inhabitant besides man*; and we have now shown that *the world occupies in the order of time the first place in the creation*, and probably it has, in some other sense, a central position. But the Scriptures will further elucidate this interesting subject.

They may be immediately seen to shed great light upon it, in two familiar statements: that the *office* of angels

is *the care of the world*; and that these higher intelligences are interested in a peculiar manner in the mission of Christ to the world, and are agents in carrying forward its designs. In regard to the first of these points, there is no exception, among those who are called angels, as regards the fact that their chief employment is the care of the world. "Are they not *all* ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) This interesting subject demands an elucidation beyond any attention which has ever been given it in any system of theology; and the indisposition to examine it, as an impalpable subject, must give way to its importance. But it is very manifest that a very powerful auxiliary comes to hand, by means of it, to show that the whole creation, rational as well as material, subordinates itself, in the plan of the creation, to this world. The earth does not seem to be hung in the centre of nature without a meaning; and is, in fact, not placed upon the outskirts of the creation. If stars and nebulae adorn our sky, and sun and moon and stellar worlds seem to move about it, the seeming, though not astronomically real, must be nevertheless a reality.

Another fact is also brought to light by this remarkable subject. It is fully apparent that *the universe is in its comparative infancy*. Whatever plans, therefore, may have been designed in its existence, they are only at the commencement of their execution. This fact, also, not only weakens any assumption that rational beings, adapted to live in material worlds, generally inhabit the remote places of the creation; but it must also affect some theological questions, which will be subsequently considered. There must certainly be some other mode of adjusting the general relations of the atonement with the plan of the Creator,

than that which is commonly used, and which is founded upon an infinity of inhabited worlds.

A congruity will be seen manifestly to subsist between these ideas and the prevalent geological doctrine respecting the ages in which the earth was fitting to become the residence of men. Facts, upon any system of explanation, undoubtedly stretch out the existence of the earth into long and indeterminable ages in the past. A striking incongruity must be observed between these long measures of preparation and the insignificance of man, viewed according to the prevailing opinion of his coëxistence with innumerable and perhaps with greater beings in other worlds; and their disagreement with other prevailing opinions, which will be considered in their place, might be made to appear. All incongruity vanishes, however, when we receive the scriptural intimation, upon the subject, that the world is suspended as a principal object of interest and importance among all the globes of the creation, although it may be inferior in magnitude to many among them.

In conclusion, it must impress us with singular emotions, not unmingled with awe, that we stand at the virtual commencement of the infinity of the creation, and must look forward to its real eternity. What developments will take place in the future results of a system, with a beginning so grand and auspicious, remains to be seen, and only a part of them are likely to be anticipated by the greatest lights furnished us by the present. Yet, if the scaffolding is so great, and the materials which are to compose the final result are so stupendous, the grandeur of the completed edifice must be upon a scale of magnitude proportionately vast. If the morning stars sang together, at the celebration of the first steps in this great plan, the whole creation

will be provided with a richer song, when the plan of the Creator expands into its intended results.

With what interest also may we inquire *who* are to be the inhabitants of this stupendous system. At present, man occupies a place of great and mysterious importance.* Will his dignity or importance in the creation increase or decline? The interest of the future portions of this volume will be enhanced by these inquiries; and, if we have advanced so far, so surely, and we may say so strangely, we may look for more useful and complete results in the sequel.

* The author of *Plurality of Worlds* has publicly expressed this idea, which the author had long before entertained, and with results which that author does not appear to have conceived. It became evident, however, upon the publication of that work, as has appeared in other instances since, that other minds were working upon this great problem.

PLAN OF THE CREATION.

PART II.

GENERAL RELATIONS OF THE MISSION OF CHRIST WITH
THIS SUBJECT.

CHAPTER IV.

RELATIONS OF THE MISSION OF CHRIST WITH THE PLAN OF THE CREATION.

Relations of the World to some Great Purpose. — Effects of Attending to all the Elements of a Subject. — The Proof Stated. — General Facts in regard to the Mission of Christ. — The Universe Exists for the Sake of the Church. — The General Plan of the Creation closely Involved with the Affairs of this World. — In fact, the Measures for the Government of the Creation Originate Here. — The Dignity of Man. — Inference in regard to the Extent of the Inhabited Creation.

THE relations of the world to some great purpose are confirmed, and at the same time elementally unfolded, by some declarations of the Scriptures respecting the general influence of that every way very great event, the advent of Christ to this world.

The alluring question respecting the designs of this event, as regards other worlds, has already excited so much attention that it might be supposed that no new fact could now be offered upon it.

It has often unexpectedly happened, however, that even a new aspect has been put upon a case by a more strict, or even by a renewed, attention to all the elements of the consideration ; and it has also happened, that facts, imperfectly weighed, and perhaps rejected in former investigations, have subsequently furnished the elements or clues of other discoveries, and have exacted an entirely new arrangement

of the case, upon a new plan of explanation. It might have been deemed very hopeless, for instance, to have made a further resolution of the stellar system, after the theories of Ptolemy, and especially after that of Copernicus; but induction, advancing from a few steps, has carried the light of absolute certainty over a vast and immeasurable space, equivalent to a material infinity. The present subject has frequently or generally been studied with some theoretical or partial design, — both obviously unfavorable to a full elucidation of the case. The developments of the subject, as they will now be presented to the reader, are the result simply of a private and general study carried through the course of many years, and which early furnished the first glimpses of that great subject upon which so many other facts will be seen to bear. It was impossible that theory should not mingle, in the first stages, with the inquiry; but facts have been made the principal objects of attention. The processes of an intellectual inquiry would not probably be of any advantage, however, to the reader, if detailed, or seldom would; and the succinct treatment of the numerous subjects which will demand our attention requires the exhibition of the results only, with the facts which produce them.

In order to save the embarrassment and labor of the reader, who would otherwise attend to facts, all whose connections he would not otherwise immediately perceive, it will be expedient to announce generally the results to which this particular inquiry upon the work of Christ will at present lead. In other words, it will be proper to commence with some brief and general deductions from some well established and generally admitted truths.

It is admitted, for instance, by all, that the mission of Christ to the world — whatever future relations it may

have with mankind — did not in fact, nor in its original intention, exclusively relate to this world. “The mediation of Christ is represented in Scripture as bringing the whole creation into union with Christ, or the people of God.” *

It will also be admitted that the Saviour has entered upon a universal dominion, generally conceded to continue forever, and this as a result of his mission here. There will be no dissent from these statements as facts. The only doubt will rest upon the perpetuity of this dominion; and this single doubt will be suspended upon a solitary passage, allowed to be obscure, in which the Saviour is represented as ultimately surrendering a kingdom to the Father.† Yet it is obviously quite immaterial in what sense the delivering up the kingdom may be intended, so far as relates to the present subject; since the general influences of the mission of Christ may be supposed to continue, entirely irrespective of his reigning in any literal sense. Still, the dominion of Christ is, in the Scriptures, represented as being perpetual. “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” ‡ The prophecy respecting the transfer of the kingdom relates to the case here covered, the world or mankind being particularly contemplated in the announcement. Able critics, therefore, very justly conceive that the resignation mentioned must be intended in some partial or figurative sense. But little difficulty will attend the explanation in the progress of our general subject.

Another remarkable fact has been presented by Mr.

* “The Gospel Its Own Witness,” Part II., c. v. By Andrew Fuller.

† 1 Cor. xv. 24–28.

‡ Luke i. 33.

Fuller, — the complete bearings of which, so far as now attainable, cannot be made to appear at the present stage of this inquiry, — namely, that the universal dominion of Christ, attained as has already been mentioned, is exerted *for the sake of the church*. “Through the mediation of Christ, is the whole creation represented as augmenting the blessedness of the church.”* It will be perceived that this is much more than the fact that some influence from the church extends to all worlds; it is, that the whole creation is in some way subordinated to its welfare. Indeed, this truly remarkable statement — whose explanation may be said to comprise the chief purpose of this volume — will be found to be the repetition of the words of Scripture itself.

These well established facts will admit of several deductions. First, the plan upon which the Creator proposes to govern the moral beings of the creation is involved in some way with transactions in the present world. This, aside from all explanations — which will be omitted at present — is evident from the fact that the mission of Christ is represented as powerfully acting beyond this world. The universal dominion of Christ began with the termination of his mission here, and resulted from it. The still more impressive fact also is a part of the evidence, that the church in all its periods occupies the chief attention of the Creator’s or the Redeemer’s government. If now we recollect that the mission of Christ is, through the church, involved with the whole history of human affairs, then the entire history of mankind is involved with the government of the

* “The Gospel Its Own Witness,” Part II., c. v. “Through the mediation of Christ, not only is the whole creation represented as augmenting the blessedness of the church, but the church as augmenting the blessedness of the whole creation.”

whole creation, — a great fact, which our subsequent attention will expand and confirm. And in this instance, also, the deduction is expressed very nearly in the language of Scripture itself. “For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” * Indeed, much more will be established by the facts which will be produced: namely, that the world is the centre, so to speak, of a great moral dominion, or rather its source; and that the measures for the universal government of the creation originate *here*.

Second: If the whole system of nature is subordinated to the welfare of the church, — than which nothing can be more plainly taught in the Scriptures, for the doctrine is not a matter of deduction, with one or two links, the error of which might escape detection, but it is a case of plain and direct statement, — then the relations of redeemed men to the creation rise to very singular and hitherto unexplained importance. Besides the general consideration of his glory as the final cause, the Creator has some great and definite object as regards his creatures. No subject can be of greater interest to mankind than this design; nothing more so than to ascertain what it is. To know that there are thousands or numberless worlds, and to understand their mechanical relations with each other, although the mind is expanded in the contemplation, and the loftiest exertions of human genius are brought into use, is still less interesting than to know the great and prime object which they fulfil. To understand the architectural principles of a building, let the style and the genius displayed in the structure be what they may, is inferior to a knowledge of the culture which resides or acts in it. All the architecture of a coun-

* 1 Cor. iv. 9.

try, the magnitude of its warehouses upon a scale of vastness, the sumptuousness of exchanges and capitols and of ecclesiastical buildings, sink to nothing, compared with the civilization which they serve. They are combinations of brick or stone and mortar, put by the side of the activity and the productiveness of human genius. Man with his affairs is superior to the materials which he employs; and such as he is as regards this terrestrial globe, such are the moral designs of the whole creation to the grandeurs exhibited in its construction. And to whatever sublimity these designs may rise, man with his affairs must exclusively, or to a principal extent, produce it.

Third: An inference is fairly deducible in regard to the probable extent in which the universe is inhabited at present. If the mediation of Christ is an important or a necessary measure for the government of all worlds, we have at least very little reason to think that the beings upon whom it was designed to operate beyond this planet are numerous, while the effects of this great event are so limited upon men, for whom we are particularly informed that it was chiefly designed. The obscurity — or the paradox, if the reader likes — which is involved in this case will be removed as we proceed in the argument. It is removable now by the conception that man, all things considered, is the most important creature in the universe.

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE CASE.

A Ladder high enough to Overlook the Affairs of the Creation. — Possibility of Computing its Inhabitants. — Proof that the Measure for Governing the Universe Originates in this World. — Evidence that the System of Nature was made for a Purpose relating to the Redemption of this World. — The Acquisition, Commencement, and Nature of the Saviour's Universal Dominion. — The Saviour's Universal Designs Accomplished by the Church. — The Magnitude of Redemption. — The Entire Wisdom of God Displayed in the Purposes relating to it. — The Affairs of the World lie at the Basis of the Concerns of the Universe. — Glimpses of the Explanation of Evil. — Inference in regard to the Population of the Universe. — Two Remarkable Facts Confirming the Subject of this Chapter. — Remarks upon the Views heretofore entertained, and upon Hypothetical Explanations in General.

THE proof may be adduced by which the positions taken in the last chapter will be maintained. The Scriptures do very clearly teach, as well as indicate, the particular design of God in the creation, besides his own glory and the moral perfection of his creatures; and it has needed at any time only a few clues to pursue this interesting subject in all its principal details. We possess a ladder high and strong enough by which to ascend to the skies, and to overlook their vast concerns. And the means will be ultimately attained, in this discussion, by which we may understand the destiny of the creation, and compute the population of the

universe above us almost as accurately as we can now tell the population of Europe in the middle ages, or that of England in the reign of Charles I. We will, for the present, occupy ourselves with the establishment and development of the principles laid down in the last chapter.

It is very clearly asserted, for instance, that the whole system of nature was made for a purpose relating to Christ; and that this purpose is inseparably connected with his mission of redemption to the world. The proof is as follows:

“For, by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and *for* him.” (Col. i. 16.)

Quite a variety of passages might be adduced to support constructively this interesting passage. But much reasoning and some critical labor would be demanded, which would be attended with the admission of irrelevant objects; and it is not the purpose of this work to overbear the mind of the plainest reader by exertions of the mind unnecessarily difficult, nor with a labored display of erudition. Proof of a corroborative nature will offer itself, in the course of the argument, without the labor and confusion attendant upon such an accumulative process. The nature of this work is not such as will require any other commendation than that which will be furnished by the subject itself, and the evidence. A higher object invites the author than that of winning the barren admiration of the reader, learned or unlearned; it is that of conveying to him one of the richest treasures of the Word of God. Nor can anything be necessary to support so clear a citation as the present. Nothing could more clearly denote the entire creation than “all things,” — “visible and invisible,” —

“in earth,” “and in heaven,” — “thrones,” “dominions,” “principalities,” and “powers,” — “all things were created by him and for him.” It is clearly affirmed that the whole creation was made for some design relating to Christ. It was made for him.

The first position, therefore, is very fully maintained; and the second will not be less so. It is affirmed that the purpose for which the creation was made is particularly involved with the Saviour’s work upon earth. “And having made peace by the blood of his Cross, by him to *reconcile* all things unto himself; by him I say, *whether they be things on earth or things in heaven.*” (Col. i. 20.) A similar declaration is found in Ephesians. “That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things *in Christ*; both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.” (i. 10.)

The coming of the Son of God to this world, and his expiating in human nature the sins of men on his cross, therefore, have procured the measure by which the creation, in all its extent, will be harmonized and blessed. The passages cited happily require no critical treatment; and the conclusion is, therefore, irresistible, and can be made as well by the unlearned as the most critical reader: just as it is believed that all truth is simple and attended with little complexity, and may generally or always, when fully attained, be comprehended by the plainest mind. A frightful array of criticism is with every one generally discouraging to an expectation of conviction or of clearness.

But the Scriptures speak more plainly of the nature of the influence which they represent as going out from this world over all others. A brief attention to what they teach upon this head, or upon the connection which exists between

the universal dominion of Christ and his work upon earth, will set in a convincing and in an expanded view the pre-announcements of the preceding chapter.

The Scriptures affirm that the supreme dominion of Christ, contemplated when he made the creation, was not undertaken or begun until his mission to the world, nor in fact till its termination; and that his recognized and universal authority was attained by this means. In short, the Saviour's dominion over the moral beings of the creation was dependent upon his mission to the world, and at its expiration he was inaugurated in his universal authority. The two general points in these statements will be shown to be true: first, the time and cause of the Saviour's dominion; second, the nature of this dominion, or the manner of its exertion.

On the first point, Paul, after speaking of the descent of the Redeemer to the world, and of his life and sufferings while remaining in "the form of a servant," adds, "*Wherefore*," for this cause, "God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth," — or departed saints. (Phil. ii. 9, 10.) The same apostle also says (Eph. iv. 10), "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens," — the Jews having had a multiplied conception of heaven, — "that he might fill all things."

These passages are very convincing as to the time when the purpose of the creation at large commenced in Christ; and also as to the fact that he entered upon his universal dominion not only in connection with, but in consequence of, his work upon the earth. Something, therefore, appears in this evolved dominion commensurate with the extraor-

dinary event of the incarnation. The relation of these two events of the incarnation and universal dominion it is of great importance to understand. But we may notice the obvious inadequacy of the fact that the Saviour was first "in the form of God," and of his powers as a Creator, to explain this case. He was doubtless qualified by his nature and powers for the supreme authority which he attained; but his dignity or purpose in the creation did not alone raise him to this supreme dominion, nor produce the grand fulfilment of the original design, until he had *as a means* expiated the sins of men upon his cross. Indeed, it is in so many words said, that the exaltation of the Saviour was a *gift* or *reward*, conferred on account of the fulfilment of his earthly mission. "*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him." The same apostle (Heb. i. 2, 3) represents him as having been "appointed heir of all things," and as having, *after* he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. On the occasion of his ascension, the Saviour said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) The Saviour had, indeed, a "glory" with the Father before the world was, and to this he expressed his desire to be restored in his prayer at the termination of his expiatory work upon earth. (John xvii. 5.) What has already been exhibited, however, upon the infancy of the creation, shows that a restoration to a universal dominion over the creation could not have been intended, since a universe of moral beings had no existence before the world was, — the time referred to; and since the Saviour acquired this dominion by his work on earth.

It can be no longer doubtful that the supreme dominion of Christ is owing to his work upon earth. Nor do the Scriptures leave it any more doubtful in what manner in

general he exerts this power, nor how its exertion is related with his mediation. It is affirmed that the purpose of the creation, or of his government, which is the same thing, is accomplished *by the church*.

In a very remarkable passage it is said by Paul, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now, unto principalities and powers in heavenly places (or, as able critics conceive, in things belonging to the kingdom of heaven or the dispensation of the Gospel *) might be made known *by the church* the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 8-10.) No one can fail to observe here the apostle's enthusiasm; nor its justification, when it is noticed that he so significantly connects the purpose of the creation of all things by Jesus Christ both with the mystery of God, and with a manifestation to be made by the church.

This extraordinary passage shows that it is by the cross, or by the Saviour's mission to the earth, that the great and chief designs of God—however deep and mysterious—will be carried out in the creation. Jews and Gentiles had a common fellowship in this mystery, and the influence of the cross would extend widely beyond this globe, over all created moral beings.

A remarkable confirmation of this conclusion is found in the declaration of Paul, that in the mystery relating to the Father and Son all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid or contained.

* Dr. Mills, of Auburn, and other critics.

“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. ii. 2, 3.)

This language is sufficiently general — and remarkable indeed it must be admitted to be — to embrace the purposes of the whole creation. *All* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are contained in the mystery referred to; and no language could more clearly denote that the explanation of the whole economy of the Creator is to be found in this subject. Some have expressed a doubt as to the particular reference of the relative rendered “whom” in our version; since the mere accordance of the grammar, irrespective of the demands of the idea, will allow that it should be referred either to the mystery or to Christ. But the present case is not affected by the decision of the question where the treasures of the Divine wisdom are said to be contained, since much of the mystery relates to Christ, and since “all fulness” and the fulness of God are said to have dwelt bodily in him — and this is mentioned in connection with the purpose of effecting a universal union through him.*

If we need further evidence that the supreme dominion of Christ is every way connected with his propitiation for sins in this world, we have the remarkable declaration that he was a “lamb ordained” or “slain from the foundation of the world,” or “before” that event.† This language might not be alone conclusive; but, taken in connection with

* Col. i. 19, 20, and context, with ii. 9.

† Rev. xiii. 8; 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

other passages, it is impossible to avoid the conviction that the offering of Christ was contemplated as a part of the design of the whole creation. Most extraordinary, indeed, if, as the edifice of nature rose, the peace-speaking blood of the Redeemer was, so to speak, sprinkled upon the materials, from the lowest stone in the foundation, as we cannot doubt that it will be upon the topmost stone of the building.

Before taking, therefore, any further steps in this argument, we are unquestionably prepared now for some very important and final deductions. It is clear that the transactions of the world are not simply related with the affairs of the universe as a curious and instructive history, *but that they lie at the basis of its concerns*. Its orders and happiness depend upon it. From this apparently inconsiderable and fallen world are therefore to proceed, in the economy of God, denoted by the apostle as mysterious, the powers by which the whole system of nature will be governed and harmonized. Evil, therefore, glimmers forth its source of solution. Order will emerge from disorder; and, as it were, a new creation will rise out of the chaos of a moral state. The denomination of the Gospel as a mystery and as unsearchable was fully authorized, in the apostolic age, from these facts.

Not only was the earth prior, in its creation and adaptation, to the rest of the creation, but it is preëminent in its moral concerns also. Nor is this globe apparently suspended simply in the midst of nature; but it is central in the moral influences which go out from it over the rest of the creation, whether inhabited at present, or to be so hereafter.

These conclusions are not doubtful inferences, but are the clear expression of the combined facts; or are, in fact,

the statement of the Scriptures, rather than deductions from them. The creation was made for Christ; and this purpose began its great course of accomplishment when the Redeemer arose from his humiliated condition on earth, to sit upon the throne of universal dominion in heaven. But still further: the great measure of his universal government was his cross, or his work of redemption upon earth.

The conclusion respecting the extent of the inhabited creation is apparently less absolute; and yet is scarcely less so. If the material creation is new, and the plan for its moral government is recent also, it is hard to conceive of beings existing before the plan; the imperfect state in which the measure is at present developed produces, therefore, the improbability that the universe can be extensively inhabited. If we connect with these deductions the reasoning in a former chapter, upon the two modes in which the atonement must affect other beings, we are barred the conjecture that besides angels and men the universe contains any moral beings as subjects of the dominion of Christ. This deduction will be proved as a fact, no longer dependent upon probability for its support, in the subsequent stages of the inquiry.

Upon the centrality of the world, however, in the moral affairs of the creation, and upon the magnitude of its concerns with them, one or two other deeply interesting facts may be noticed.

In a remarkable description of the throne of God, contained in the opening parts of the book of Revelation (chaps. 4, 5), the narrator depicts in a collective manner what appears to be the whole dominion of God as relates to moral beings; and indeed it is so affirmed. There is, in the first place, the throne of the Almighty, with the elders, and

symbolical creatures, and great numbers of angels, grouped around it. If the throne, or the vision, may be thought to have been displayed for a particular occasion relating to the affairs of the world, yet how shall we account for the fact that a lamb, as it had been slain, is represented as being in the midst of *the throne itself*, and human affairs therefore as being central to those of angels,* who stand in an outer circle around all the other beings; unless, in this confessedly symbolical representation, there was an intention of keeping up the preëminence of man in the system of nature. Besides, the elders and symbolical creatures, occupying an inner circle, speak of themselves as redeemed out of every kindred and tribe and people. We can scarcely exert such a stretch of interpretation as to regard these imaginary beings as standing as proxies for the church. There is, in fact, no reason for supposing that the living creatures, as well as the elders, do not in their personal character, so to speak, represent something belonging to mankind. They, in fact, speak of themselves as made kings and priests unto God, and as expecting to reign on the earth.† There can be no doubt that the vision, with its images taken from the governing powers of the ancient church, the elders, and from conceptions which the remains of Nineveh and the animal-headed divinities or deified men of Egypt show to have been prevalent in the ancient world, was designed to show the importance of human affairs. Here, then, in an inspired vision of the eternal throne, with the whole creation present with its representatives, man with his affairs is every way first.

In the same book, the designation of the Saviour as the

* This interesting fact has also occurred to the attention of the very able editor of the *Theological and Literary Journal*,—Mr. Daniel Lord.

† Chap. v. 8–10.

Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,*—expressions applied to the Almighty,†—harmonizes strikingly with those developments of the Scriptures in which we have seen that the purpose of the creation is comprised in Christ. He commenced the execution of the great plan which comprises the purpose of the creation, and he will also complete it. Corresponding with this is the designation of the Saviour as the Word or the Revealer;‡ as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person § The Creator will be revealed in all worlds by the Son; and nature itself must be studied in Christ. If the Saviour began the manifestations of his Father in the incipience and in the more full undertaking of the work of redemption, as it seems to be plain he did; and if he has done this in some measure through the ministration of angels, as we are told he has,—an instrumentality in various ways connected with this subject in the Bible,—the moral beings of the creation cannot be very numerous to whom the Father is revealed by the Son, while the means of the revelation are so recent and immature.

Thus far we have proceeded with very satisfactory results, and one passage of Scripture completes the evidence that man holds the central position in the moral economy of the Creator; but by a single statement it carries the evidence much further, and shows that man constitutes the chief object of the Divine government. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things *to the church.*" || The great object of the Redeemer's universal government, therefore, is the care of the church. Nor does this single declaration stand alone; for

* Rev. i. 10–18.

§ Heb. i. 2, 3.

† Rev. i. 8.

|| Eph. i. 22.

‡ John i. 1.

the church is called the "body" of Christ, — "which is his body;" and, still more, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." * Such a character as that last given must apply to the church in its collective capacity, irrespective of time, including all the periods of its existence. There must be here great extravagance of language, or else there will be nothing anywhere, in any world, or in any period, which will exhibit the complete manifestation of the Divine Wisdom, but the church; nowhere else will the plan of the creation be unfolded but here. "Fullness" may in the original Greek sometimes denote the crew of a ship, as that which occupies the vessel. But the word cannot in the present instance mean the whole multitude of believers, for the force of the idea relates to God, as filling the church. It is his fulness which is spoken of, who filleth all in all. Just as it is said that in Christ all the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily.† Nor is the declaration more remarkable, taken in the common and natural acceptation, than the preceding statement that Christ has been made head over all things *to* the church. And wherein, except in its more absolute or general sense, does it differ from the declaration that the church, the house of God, is "the pillar and ground of the truth,"‡ or from other passages, the import of which we have already considered? It has been the fault of criticism that it has endeavored to soften down the meaning of words and declarations which seemed hyperbolic, and merely from the fact of some conceived extravagance in the idea. Such a mode of explanation, however, does not render a book the exponent of itself, but the changeable index of existing opinions. Several texts have experienced the fortune of such a treatment.

* Eph. i. 23.

† Col. ii. 9.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

Criticism, therefore, does not seem capable of explaining away the extraordinary declaration of the passage considered; which makes it clear that the great purpose of the creation is to be fulfilled in the church. We will arrest the argument, however, at this point, and conclude this chapter by noticing once more the opinions heretofore entertained respecting the extent of inhabited nature.

It was hastily assumed, from the revelations of astronomy, that innumerable worlds had been, perhaps from countless ages, fitted up with ministrations for the senses. The Divine Wisdom, also, being deemed capable of perfecting at once a moral creation, — an hypothesis unreflectingly assumed, against the warning uttered by the moral condition of the world and by the history of angels, — it was believed that the creation was already occupied with moral beings, and was vocal in all its extent with the praises of God.

It must be admitted that such a view of the creation is highly probable so far as relates to the ultimate designs of nature; since it cannot be supposed that innumerable suns exist only to transmit diminished portions of their light to the world, to relieve the darkness of our night, and to discover to us the magnitude of a creation untenanted and untenanted, and barren of any conceivable design corresponding with its grandeur. There is something very high in this contemplation, as raising the mind to a sublime moral conception of the heavenly worlds. We seem to hear the coëxistent choirs of the creation uttering the praises of God, and to see a vast tide of life rolling over all worlds. The hypothesis does not tell us how the vast and older outer-creation should rejoice in innocence, and bask in the richest sunlight of the Divine favor, and the contemplator himself at the same time look up to this enrapturing scene

from a world of misery and sin. But it must, nevertheless, be admitted that the contemplation is exciting and sublime.

It was natural, also, in the ardor of such a view, to seize upon the texts which have already been cited, and which reveal the general influence of the atonement, as proving with the clearest certainty that the joys of the redeemed are actually participated in, in some way, by all other worlds; that the intelligence of redemption has outrun the narrow limits of our sphere, and gone over the creation with its inspiring views of the character of God. It was not indeed an unscriptural fact that the mission of Christ to men would diffuse its influences over all worlds, and that the praises of redemption would not ultimately be restricted to this globe. But before the song was depicted as already begun, before its melody excited the raptures of pious meditation, before the infidel argument was assailed with weapons supposed to be newly derived from heaven, it would have been well to have carefully scrutinized and to have firmly settled the question whether the hypothesis of a widely-peopled creation stood itself upon unassailable grounds. It would be unfortunate if, after the vision of a widely-populated universe, rejoicing in the grace of this world, had become a belief so firm as to fill all minds, as to occupy the familiar meditations of the family and the teachings of the pulpit, and even to support the hopes of the dying saint, the doctrine nevertheless should not stand the test of examination, but should have levelled against it the very forces by which it was sustained; if it should be found that the scriptural statements respecting the general or universal influence of the atonement, instead of supporting the conclusion that there is a vast extent of inhabited nature, rather demand a contrary inference; if astronomy, reduced to

the sifting process of examination, should admit that it knew nothing of actual inhabitants in other worlds; and if geology and the science of the scalpel should return the same answer; and if, therefore, the splendid structure, so industriously reared, and so long upheld, should fall apart as the airy fabric of a splendid vision.

The overturning of this popular hypothesis will, therefore, from its consequences, admit of some cautionary reflections. The world is disposed to treat leniently those exertions of genius which please it, although they mislead it; nor is it disposed to attribute any turpitude to such efforts. But there is no subject in the world in regard to which licenses of human fancy are more hurtful than religion. It was very characteristic of the logical mind of Mr. Fuller, that, although he did not reject the doctrine that other worlds are extensively inhabited, he conceived that the general influence of the atonement might be received without any hypothesis at all. The Christian world, however, unanimously received the doctrine to which we have just alluded with enthusiasm.

Now, it must happen, if we connect with our religious belief any edifices whatever of human fancy, and make them a part of our faith in God, that these ideal structures will ultimately fall; and it may happen that both their persistence and their ruin will cause some temporary damage to the faith of the world, as must occur, in one or both cases, to Christianity itself. Plain minds are not always capable of distinguishing between the truth itself and the human ingredients which are mingled with it; and even the suspicion that our religious inheritances are half the opinions of men may be very serious in its effects. The lingering infidelity of this age — we might say the growing, certainly not diminishing, dissatisfaction with our religious systems —

although scepticism has long yielded to the bare evidences of the truth of revelation — is supported more by the condition of religious belief, as unpurged of human glosses, than by any other cause.

The spirit of the Baconian philosophy has very slowly penetrated religious speculation, and is, indeed, hostile to much of it. We have little to complain of the Romanist, if we cast our own mantles of fancy, or of metaphysics, over the Word of God; and little complaint to make of the limited efficacy of the Scriptures, if we are ever ready to invest them with some glittering and diverting attraction. And if we wage our petty wars around these unprofitable edifices of fancy, we may provoke the sneer of the careless, and call forth the scorn of the infidel, as an undistinguished mass of enthusiasm. We have occasion to expand the intelligence and the independence of the Reformation to the uttermost borders of Christendom. Every Christian man has occasion to think for himself; and he should refuse his assent to every dogma which he cannot see to be plainly derived from the sacred volume.

In Rome, thought is sin. Not so in the Protestant world. And how much would the Christian and Protestant world truly gain, in the end, if it altogether discarded the authority of its traditions, and resisted the claim of men to impose their opinions, — which has been the source of the squabbles of Christendom, and of half the darkness which has overspread it, — and if it went back to the pure oracles of truth, and reconstructed, with cautious measures, its religious belief. It ought, indeed, to remove from the interpretation of the Scriptures, and above all, at any cost, to separate from popular belief — or, what would be the same thing, from pulpit ministrations — all hypotheses and mere

tradition, and earnestly endeavor to strip the Christian faith of those meretricious rags which flaunt in such disgusting prominence in every sun.

There would be some who would cry the downfall of Christianity, upon the adoption of such a course, and who would alarm and perhaps turn back some timid minds by their superannuated terrors; and without doubt every device of ecclesiastical power would be applied to resist it. But the world has nothing to fear from those who croak that the world is going backward. There were those who prophesied the decease of Christianity, if Copernicus and Galileo propagated their discoveries. There were some, who slumbered in a dreamy paradise of ignorance, who opposed the circulation of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, because the laborer would not follow the plough, if he read in his Bible that he who put his hand to the plough and looked back was unfit for the kingdom of God. But the world would have gone to sleep long ago in the arms of the Aristotelian philosophy, and of Rome herself, if it had put on the night-cap at the bidding of every one who himself donned it.

There are some who affect to despise the exertions of the human understanding, while they laud their own. But there is no other way for the Gospel to save men than that it should penetrate their understandings. The apostle desired that the faith of the world should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. But anything may be preached, — it may be the Gospel, it may be tradition, it may be anything whatever, — and how shall it be received as the Word of God unless the evidence of its being such has penetrated the mind? The Word of God — the messages of the Gospel divested of all human

glosses — is the only instrument for the conversion of the world. And it is a power of invincible force. Its enemies have always fallen before it. It is a Gorgon's head, which will turn to stone the hardy adversary who dares brave it.

PLAN OF THE CREATION.

PART III.

PROGRESS OF THE SCHEME; OR, INDICATIONS OF THE
PLAN OF THE CREATION IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF
HUMAN HISTORY AND OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER VI.

EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

Interest with which the Subject of Evil is Invested. — The Difficulties of the Problem may be easily Magnified. — Duration of Evil. — Nature of the Problem. — Necessity of Connecting Physical and Moral Evil together. — Progressive Perfection of our Planet. — Narrow Range of the Problem. — Whether the Future Condition of the Wicked should be Mingled with it. — How this Dreadful Subject is to be Understood. — The Fortunes which the great Question of the Origin of Evil has Experienced. — Greek and Gnostic Doctrines. — Asiatic Gnosticism. — Modern Hypothesis. — Leibnitz. — The Idumean Explanation, or the Doctrine of the Bible. — Its Fortunes. — The Clue. — Sagacity of Calvin. — Usefulness of the Design.

No subject has appeared to be invested with greater mystery than the strange history which has been transpiring in the world; or than the existence of evil. The subject does not diminish in interest, but to the contrary, in contemplating the remedy which has been provided to meet it; since it has not, although existing so long, mitigated the case upon any great scale, nor anywhere in the world effected its removal. The problem appears to be one of great difficulty; and yet we may easily magnify the difficulties of the case, and misapprehend those facts which are the most obvious, and those which the Scriptures particularly furnish upon the subject.

The Scriptures do not teach that evil will ever be separated from the condition of mankind upon earth, let their

existence here run on to whatever duration it may. In the promise made, when the transgression of the first pair added sin to the natural evil already existing, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, the declaration is fully made that a victory would be acquired in turn. But bruising does not necessarily denote absolute extinction; and if the serpent should die, the fruits of his subtilty might remain. It is added in the narrative, that while the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, the *heel* of the woman's offspring would be wounded in turn.* If men are to be saved by the mediation of Christ, moral evil obviously must continue in the world while such is the fact.

The question, therefore, is, why the existence of evil, to be perpetual to some extent in this world, should have been allowed; and why the remedy, which has been in existence and been acting for six thousand years, should have accomplished its intentions upon so limited a scale.

It will be perceived, therefore, that this formidable subject is reduced within some definite and appreciable limits by this view of it. It is obvious, from the announcement made at the fall, that the case is a diminishing one; and that, at some period, the existing facts, which seem to render this problem at present so difficult, will be inconsiderable. The case may be regarded as one of progress; and so far as this point needs any proof, the necessity will be abundantly met in the course of our undertaking.

This view of the case, as a diminishing subject, may be regarded as embracing both physical and moral evil. The apostle Paul represents the whole creation as participating in the blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom, when its bless-

* Gen. iii. 15.

ings shall have been fully produced ; and the animal kingdom in the world must be included in this extraordinary statement, since the animal creation is said to groan and travail in pain with man in the present state of the development of the divine plan.* A development of this particular point would be impracticable at the present moment, in which the case is presented in some of the elements of its solution, and in outline. But it may be observed at the same time that it would be hazardous to assert, with the physical changes now undergoing under our own eye, and with our knowledge of the past geological ages in a great number of particulars, that no changes at present inscrutable to us will occur, which will greatly change for the better the condition of our planet. It has already undergone several metamorphoses which fitted it for purposes which it does not now fulfil. If we should enter upon the domain of speculation, it may be observed that the changes produced by the flood may be suspected to be much more than have generally been conceived. It is not improbable that the most remarkable varieties in the physical appearance of mankind may have been produced by that event. Besides, the source of those waters which drowned the world has not been fully explored. If a nicely-balanced fluid ring† exploded upon that occasion, and washed the continents into their present pointed shapes, with their southern trendings, and the waters spoken of as being above the firmament should be restored to their primitive condition, some very remarkable and not altogether appreciable changes must take place in the condition of the

* Rom. viii. 19-23.

† See the well-known theory of Professor Pierce in regard to the present existence of such a ring.

world.* But, all speculations aside, the problem of evil is narrowed down by conceiving it to be a diminishing case. And it is still further narrowed down, by contemplating it in relation to this world, to which it principally relates.

It is in relation to evil, as it exists here, that it is proposed to contemplate the subject. The previous discussions in this work have taken the problem down from its vast sweep over the whole extent of nature. The case of some fallen angels — we do not know how many — and that of wicked men when they die, alone have any tendency of any moment to extend the reach of this problem beyond the world.

The first of these points probably requires no principles for its solution essentially different from those which relate to the same phenomena in the world. The second point might involve the subject in great difficulty. It would be essential, on mixing it with the discussion, to ascertain, as a fact, precisely what the Scriptures teach regarding it; for they alone must be our source of information. It is more than doubtful whether the exact truth of this every way melancholy case has been deduced from the sacred volume. The subject has almost been too awful for investigation, and the minds of uninstructed people have been too prejudiced to receive patiently any new information regarding it; and it has been left with images and facts very confusedly mixed together in the public mind.

It was once universally believed, in accordance with old traditional opinions, that literal material fire was the instru-

* It tends to confirm the belief that some great cataclysm, or the flood mentioned in the Scriptures, passed from the south to the north, that so vast a belt in the northern parts of both hemispheres contains such multitudes of animal remains upon the surface, or just buried beneath it. — See "Simpson's Travels in Northern Asia and America."

ment of the protracted tortures of the lost. This has now very generally and very reasonably, like that of the resurrection of the same particles of matter, been laid aside. It is not improbable that the common belief upon this dreadful subject needs still further corrections.*

The Christian world has no interest in preserving error, nor in deriving its belief in any particular from the abyss of Romanism. That church, justly regarded as apostate, is the result of dragging the net on the part of Christian "fathers," so called, through Roman paganism, and through Gnostic and Platonic philosophy, and almost every other source; and Protestants have uniformly agreed to reject these gatherings as "bad" rather than "good," like the fish in the parable, whenever they have seriously turned their attention to them.

It is quite certain that the meaning of the Scriptures in regard to the final and utter condemnation of the wicked — a fact itself which cannot upon scriptural grounds be called in question — is covered up with various imagery, not quite compatible with each other when taken literally, as fire and darkness; and that the subject is mixed with Jewish and heathen fables of a physical subterranean world or place. The sacred writers frequently use existing opinions, as illustrations or imagery, without justifying them as a matter of fact.†

* If men like John Foster have been perplexed with this subject, and have fallen into the error of the restoration of the wicked, like Origen, as their only means of escape, — and Thomas Dick, as it appears, the author of the "Christian Philosopher," must now be added to the number, — it must be obvious that the subject demands a new investigation.

† The doctrine of the existence of departed spirits in some place until the second coming of Christ is plainly taught in the Scriptures; but it is well known to all critical readers, and to others who have sought information upon this subject, that the Bible has taught nothing in regard

It, at least, remains a doubt whether the images, and the general language used in this case, may not be interpreted upon either principle of the complete extinction of the wicked, *after the second coming of Christ*, or of their continued suffering. The prepossessions of the Christians of the first centuries, arising from their education in Jewish and heathen schools, led them rather to adopt or to fall in with the latter. But the Saviour significantly says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. x. 28.) There is nothing said of the continued existence of the wicked after the second coming of Christ; but they are spoken of as dead, as suffering the punishment of death, while the righteous alone are represented as living, as entering into life and eternal life. The subject has been confused by not distinguishing between the period which precedes the second coming of Christ and the second coming itself. Archbishop Whately has very intelligently observed that it

to this place itself. The references of the Bible to such a place in particular are mere images. On any other principle the Bible would be very inconsistent with itself; for in one place it teaches us that the spirit of man ascends *upwards* to God, while that of the beast only goes *downwards* into the earth (Eccl. iii. 21; xii. 7); and in another, Paul uses the conception that some of the dead are *under* the earth. (Phil. ii. 10.) One of these ideas must be figurative; nor can it be doubted which is. If we should take the conception of Hades, or Sheol, as the literal one, we should turn many very interesting images into preposterous and inconsistent facts. The good and bad would be within sight and hearing of each other, and the dead must be regarded as having sometimes arisen from their beds in Hades and refused burial to very wicked persons. (Luke xvi.; Isaiah xiv.) But it would be impossible to exhibit this subject in full in a brief note. The reader is referred to "Campbell's Dissertations," and to other works—too few and imperfect—upon this subject.

ought no longer to be regarded as a necessary part of Christian faith that the wicked will perpetually exist in a state of consciousness and suffering.*

It is obvious that a doubtful question need not be admitted into the present discussion upon the origin and design of evil. This would be to mix up supposable elements with a real case. The eternal misery of the wicked — supposing them to exist in a conscious state of suffering — presents the problem of evil in a complicated form, and in such a form that its solution is not conceivable in any satisfactory way. For the necessity of evil running out in the most frightful manner into eternal ages plunges the subject into an abyss which it would seem vain to explore. Some necessity for such suffering *as an example* would be the only probable and approximate solution which would occur; for the supposition that God, who created, cannot terminate the existence of any being, is not only highly improbable, but it appears to be unscriptural, and is absurd. This unphilosophical conception has had the effect to seem to cast a necessity for the punishment of the wicked upon the Creator, because they could not be destroyed. But it is unworthy of credit, and is besides weak in itself; for the being who can envelop the mind, every sixteen hours, in the unconsciousness of slumber, could keep it forever in a state of oblivion, if he were unable to destroy it.

Evil, then, must be contemplated where it comes under

* The author may take leave to say — and he trusts that it will be a verification of other statements of a similar nature in this volume — that the conclusions of this distinguished writer fell in with those which he had previously attained. The attention of the author was long ago called to this subject, in some pastoral labors with a class of Adventists, whose unhappy errors in several respects he endeavored to remove. — See “A View of the Scripture Revelations Concerning a Future State, by Richard Whately, D.D., Archbishop of Dublin.”

our eye, and is known to be a fact; and those who feel bound to receive the doctrine of the perpetual misery of millions of mankind must consider it as an outside or incidental problem, to be explained when we understand what most comes under our observation. A knowledge of our solar system preceded that of the rest of nature; and, although the universe may be taken as a whole, the principles applied to the government of our solar system have not been shaken by the increase of our knowledge respecting the rest. The contrary has been the case.

The subject of evil is narrowed down, therefore, to the deeply interesting question, What are the ends to be accomplished by the existence of a system of evil in the world, which is to terminate, even in its diminishing scale, only with the existence of man upon this planet? This is the true case. This grave question it is our purpose to discuss, with such light as may be cast upon it, and in its important connection with the great plan of the creation. That it has such a connection is indicated in the fact that natural evil, the forerunner of moral evil, had its birth with the origin of this planet, and especially with the first existence of the animal life upon it. A scheme, of which evil is a part, is inseparable from the great purpose of the creation. Evil will be found, however, to be subsidiary only in this great plan.

The subject of evil has experienced the fortunes of every other great question which has affected the interests or perplexed the understandings of men. There is reason to believe that, among the occasions of "the hard speeches" which "ungodly sinners" before the flood uttered against God, this was the chief; and that they complained that they had been cast out of Paradise, and condemned to misery, for a fault of their ancestor, or of Adam. Blas-

phemy of this kind has sometimes been repeated; but it was avoided among the Greek and Roman philosophers, by the belief or notion, which deeply imbued all ancient philosophy, that evil is a fatality, alike independent of God and man, — a conception which has long been justly discarded from all reasoning upon this subject, unless it should be in the case of a few minds wedded to heathenized religious speculations.

The Gnostic doctrine, which so deeply corrupted the theology of the ancient church even in its greatest teachers, that evil resides essentially in matter, — although spiritual beings had fallen, — and that the soul must, therefore, disconnect itself as far as possible from this union, is a strange medley of truth and error, partly derived from the Scriptures and in part from nature, and for the most part at variance with both. When we know that the monastic practice, and the system of penances, together with the doctrine of purgatorial fires, with other exceptionable doctrines and practices, had their origin in part, or their support, in this doctrine, we shall have no prepossession in its favor.

The Manichean or the Oriental Gnostic doctrine of the existence of two evil principles or divinities, independent of each other, which was accepted for a time, is not worthy of a more serious attention. This doctrine, which existed in oriental nations and in Egypt, and which formed a part of the philosophy of Zoroaster, indicates how far the explanation of evil lies beyond the reach of the human mind when uninstructed in the Scriptures.

Modern hypothesis, as was scarcely to have been expected, has wandered into an equal and even still greater wildness of speculation, by attributing to God, or seeming to do so when perhaps not intended, a greater preference for his own glory than for the present or even the collective

and future happiness of his creatures. It has gone upon the principle, true in fact, that God cannot do wrong; but it has sheltered explanations under this covering which entirely revolutionize any just conceptions of the Divine character, and which, if they should be embodied in human action, would be instantly condemned. Whatever truth may be hidden under the startling dogma that it is a sufficient explanation of the origin and permission of evil that God glorifies his own justice and mercy by its means, the statement is repugnant to our conceptions of the Divine nature as derived from the Scriptures; and it can never be expected to obtain the suffrages of mankind. However acceptable this doctrine may be to a few minds, and however necessary a part it may be deemed to be of any religious system, it is in fact an excrescence upon religion, which the knife should unsparingly cut away. God cannot be in his nature a perfectly good being, upon such an hypothesis; or he must be governed by some fatality, if the mere display of himself to his creatures requires the misery of many of them. Such a character appearing among mankind would excite the horror of all good men. As good a conception of God may be said to exist in India. This explanation might be deemed to be a Christian reproduction of one of its many-headed monsters. It is removing the Redeemer from the cross, — who shows the love of God, and that he has no pleasure that any should perish, — and putting in his place Brahma or Siva. If we conceive of God as really seeking his own happiness only, and as exhausting the happiness of many millions of creatures to feed it, the conception better suits heathen ignorance and abomination than Christian knowledge. The Bible teaches us everywhere that God is not willing that any should perish, and that the Redeemer tasted death for every man. We should repel

such a conception, therefore, as we would the reimportation of the gods of the capitol again into the church. A distinction has indeed been made between the essential and the declarative glory of God; but it is not easily apprehended by the common mind, and has certainly not always been observed by those who have adopted it. The idea presented of God in the Scriptures as an explanation of all his acts is that he is a being of love; and we are required to be like him in this affection, with the explanation that love worketh no ill to one's neighbor, and that it is therefore the fulfilling of the law. This is the Christian conception; and every opposite one should excite the abhorrence of a Christian mind.*

While, however, Christian philosophy has shown so vagrant a tendency upon this subject, the world owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the German philosopher Leibnitz, for leading the subject out of the horrible abysses where ignorance and speculation have together seemed disposed to cast it. The explanation of this eminent man must, so far as it goes, meet with the assent of every thinking and Christian person, who desires to understand this subject. It is manifest, if God, in projecting the scheme of the universe, revolved all possible plans in his mind and chose the best, that he could be no more responsible for

* To live for the glory of God, or in affectionate obedience to him, is our highest rule of action; and it must constitute the felicity of heaven to love with all the heart — as believers indeed do now, but then without sin — the Father of Mercies from whom every good and perfect gift descends. But what may be our supreme rule was not necessarily the final cause of the creation. To confound these things is a blunder of logic. God may also have made all things for his own pleasure, or for purposes which he alone could have conceived, and from feelings which, when no creature existed, he alone could have felt. But it would be a very absurd logic which should transmute this fact into a Divine egotism.

evil — if he gave being to any system — than for the ideas of his understanding. It is obvious that this explanation covers only a part of the case, and does not produce the actual reasons which decided the choice of the particular system. Still, this interesting hypothesis has done much to render the subject intelligible. It has put it more within the grasp of our understandings. Voltaire, indeed, who manifested little acuteness in regard to this problem, sharply attacked, in a poem upon the destruction of Lisbon, both the maxim of Pope, that “whatever is is right,” and this explanation of the German philosopher. His observations are, as might have been expected, superficial, though in some respects just. He has noticed the defect of the hypotheses of Leibnitz with something like a sneer.*

But the most memorable effort of attention ever recorded upon the subject of evil is found, happily where no doubt can ever be felt as to its dignity or seriousness, in the book of Job; and which was capable long ago of surely guiding the mind upon this difficult subject. The principal personage of this book, directing his attention to the facts in the case under the sharp instigation of his sufferings, startled his contemporaries with the judgment that evil is neither beyond the control of God nor always to be viewed as a

* The reader may feel obliged for an extract from the poem referred to, of this wanton and jeering assailant of Christianity; but whose ribaldry, with that of his associates, was too much occasioned by the vagrancies of Christian philosophy.

“ Leibnitz ne m’apprend point par quels noeuds invisibles
 Dans le mieux ordonné des univers possibles
 Un désordre éternel, un chaos de malheurs,
 Mêlé à nos vains plaisirs de réelles douleurs,
 Ni pourquoi l’innocent, ainsi le coupable,
 Subit également ce mal inévitable.
 Je ne concevais pas plus comment tout serait bien :
 Je suis comme un docteur ; hélas ! je ne sais rien.”

Poemes et Discours en Vers de Voltaire.

punishment of sin. Nor would this judgment be altogether unopposed, though affirmed of God, at present. Theology has not always been a clear mirror of the Divine mind. The contemporaries of Job felt called upon to oppose his judgment, as alike impious and dangerous to the individual. They summoned for this purpose all the resources of their experience and invention. As usual, neither party convinced the other; and the controversy continued until it was decided in favor of the patriarch, and *against* the doctrine that suffering is in all cases to be explained as a punishment of transgression. It is remarkable that the judgment of God should seem to decide this controversy, turning upon a point of such moment, no further than by confirming the opinions of Job. This, however, would be a superficial view of the case, if we left it in this manner. A little observation will show that the discourse of God turns entirely upon his *wisdom* and *power*. Such a direction of the thoughts upon such a subject would seem to be a significant intimation that the solution of the subject is to be attained *by following this clue*. The solution lies in the wisdom and power of God! It came into being by the will of God, and will be controlled for the best purposes by him. It must be admitted that much evil is allowed which might be prevented. No one can suppose that God does not possess the power to prevent the assassin from destroying an innocent victim; and the doubt expressed that there may be an error in our conception of the real innocence of the victim, would decide against the good character of martyrs who have been assassinated and burnt, and even against the Redeemer himself, who suffered death in a manner equivalent to hanging. The New Testament assures us that the righteous are chastised for their improvement; and this is certainly very different from punishment. The idea that

the advantages of believers aggravate their guilt and enhance their punishment, is, as applied to the present case, an invention. Their chastisements are manifestly not adjusted upon a scale of such a nature; for, to be so, they would be enormously severe, instead of being light, as they actually are.

Nor can we any more doubt that evil exists in the system of nature by the arrangement of God; and always has done so, even before the fall of man, or before any punishment could have been devised against him. The brutal races have received their instincts from God; and floods and fire receive their commission from him. Job reasoned upon these principles with his friends. A powerful example of his reasoning, as well as a specimen of his opinions, may be seen in the following extract.

Excited, in some degree, by what he probably regarded as the obstinacy of his friends, he replies: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. *Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of God hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*" (xii. 7-10.) Mr. Barnes has, with his usual penetration, very justly apprehended this case. But it may be doubted whether he has quite seized upon the whole idea. It is not, simply, that God does not treat men altogether according to the merit of their conduct; but that much that may be called evil may be ascribed to God. He has given the beasts their instincts, and to the earth its destructive powers. He allows the continuance of the moral effects of the fall; to which Job very plainly alludes, in the course of his argument. As regards the subject in general, "Who

knoweth not," he says, "in all these that the hand of God hath wrought this?" The patriarch, in fact, retorted upon his adversaries their charge of impiety; and he did it in connection with an array of evidence which they were unable to produce on their part, or to resist on his. "Will ye speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? Will ye accept his person? Will ye contend for God?" This was bold language; but it was justified by the charge which they made, that his unparalleled sufferings were the result of his crimes. Indeed, it would be difficult to find reasoning more powerful, or an example of greater controversial eloquence, than may be seen in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters inclusive of that remarkable book. A part of this noble passage is incorporated in the burial service of one of the branches of the Protestant church.

It is impossible to set aside the argument of Job. The book, taken altogether, furnishes one fact of great practical value: that the existence of evil, so clearly allowed and so clearly a part of the divine plan, must be intended for an important use in the design of the Creator. It tells us where to solve this case; which is a great advancement towards the solution. We are not to seek it in some abstract conceptions of *justice*; but in relation with a general conception of the divine character, and especially with the divine wisdom and power. It is all the more that God himself appears to have furnished us with this particular assistance and direction of our inquiries. We are certain, also, in following this clue, if we meet with the disapprobation of those who have succeeded to the prejudices and pertinacity of Job's antagonists, to have the approval of God; with which we may be content.

Let, however, the origin of moral evil have been what it may, and the particular design of evil in general be what

it may ; it clearly cannot exceed the design or the purpose of God to govern it for a beneficial end, since he allows its existence. But there was no door through which it could have come into existence but his will ; and his purpose will be justified in the result. The Scriptures explicitly assure us that divine power exercises a complete control over the subject ; that it does not lie out of the bounds of the empire of God ; and, also, that he does not exert all the forces of his power directly or immediately to repel it.

These are extraordinary facts ; but they must be admitted to be true, and they were long ago perceived and acknowledged by the sagacious mind of Calvin. It is evident that the power of God might at any time suspend the course of human events, and abolish forever the connection between the consequences of Adam's sin and his posterity. The taint of the original apostasy may cease. That this does not occur must be sufficient evidence that it is the divine pleasure to continue it. Evil is an instrument of the divine purpose ! The Jews were instructed to carry into their captivity — where contrary ideas prevailed — the doctrine of the absolute supremacy of God over this subject. (Isa. xlv. 5-7.) "I am the Lord, and there is none else ; there is no God besides me. — That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness : I make peace, and create evil : I the Lord do all these things." Such language is too plain to be misconceived. Its allusion to the philosophy known to us by the name of Medo-Bactrian (and subsequently Manichean), and which prevailed where the captives were to live, and its intention to combat it, are very plain. The very language of this philosophy is employed,

“light” and “darkness” — its Ormuzd and Ahriman. The meaning cannot be mistaken. A great number of other passages might be added to sustain the force of this citation, were it needful.*

We have the advantage of looking upon the actual state of things, on establishing these facts. We possess, at the start, the conviction — however general — that evil is an instrument of the divine economy. This position is so important and interesting, that before we consider the particular use of this measure, or the design of its adoption, and before considering the particular relation of the subject with the design of this work, we will notice an affecting warrant which we have for believing that divine wisdom is capable of the fullest justification, in suffering the melancholy evils which operate in human history.

* See Gen. i. 20 ; Rom. viii. 20, 28, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

INDICATION IN THE SAVIOUR'S HUMANITY THAT THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IS BENEFICIAL.

The Progressive Diminution of Evil to be effected by Christ. — Actual Assumption of our Suffering and Dying Nature, with an Equal Subjection to the Necessity of Dying. — This Extraordinary Act intended for a most Touching Manifestation of the Compassion of God to our World. — The Saviour became a Man, with a Manifestation of God in Human Flesh, to show the Sympathy of Heaven with us, since God sent his Son to share our Evils with us. — Nothing more Extraordinary, more Exhilarating, or more Certain, than this Fact. — The Saviour's Assumption of Human Nature perpetual. — The Beneficial Design of Evil, and the Certainty of a Glorious Result of the Present System of Evil, proved by these Facts. — Milton's Hymn of the Nativity.

WE may pause, at this point, for a moment, to notice a touching fact, too interesting and too important to be passed by, and which is as good as any direct evidence upon the origin and design of evil to show that there is nothing in the subject disparaging to the goodness or the wisdom of God.

We cannot doubt that very high evidence is, indeed, furnished upon this point, by the predictions of the Scriptures, which denote that what we now call evil will be reduced to very inconsiderable magnitude; or be, as regards everything but the past, extinguished, at least comparatively so, in the progress of the divine plan. The

seed of the woman is to bruise the serpent's head; and numerous predictions very clearly denote a similar result. But we refer now to the great instrument of this progress.

We are told that "God so loved the world;" * and, as its evidence, that the Redeemer was "made of a woman, made under the law," † and was in all respects a proper man by the assumption of our nature, "with all the essential qualities and common infirmities thereof." ‡ We are told, also, upon this interesting subject, that forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, and subject to death, Christ also took part of the same, that he might himself die, and overcome him who had the power of death, and deliver those who were all their lifetime subject to bondage, through the fear of dying. § And it is furthermore said, in regard to his sufferings in our nature, that "in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." ||

There cannot be a sound theological principle which presents the incarnation in a more affecting and important light than this; namely, that our Saviour being superior to man, "in the form of God," ¶ took upon him the burden of our humanity's woes, — sin excepted, into which he did not fall, — and this, for an effectual exhibition of the compassions of God to our world. All else but sin the Redeemer had for this purpose; and these were essential for its accomplishment. He had those weaknesses, or constitutional infirmities, which are the source of temptation and misery to us. For this is particularly affirmed: — "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points

* John iii. 16.

† Gal. iv. 4.

‡ Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly, chap. viii., § 2.

§ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

|| Heb. ii. 18.

¶ Phil. ii. 6.

tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore," adds the apostle, "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.) Calvin justly remarks, upon this valuable passage, that the apostle speaks of affections in the Saviour which are vicious in us, though they were the source of no sin in him; and by which, having overcome them, he is able to sympathize with his suffering followers.* It is not easy to see, therefore, how our Saviour did not possess our actual fallen humanity, as we call it; with this advantage only, that he assumed it with a previous experience, and was not insensibly brought under its dominion by the development of intelligence surrounded by and in the arms of these terrible powers. He had all the inciting elements of the depravity in our flesh;† but it made no invasion of his superior nature. Nor can it be doubted that it will be in this way that original sin will be overcome hereafter: by the accumulations of experience, which will be applied in the earliest culture of the human being, and which will be the inheritance of mankind through the second Adam, — a better legacy, which will counter-vail the mischief which has come down to us from the fall.

The great fact which we deduce, however, is, that the Saviour knew by experience the evils of the world. In fact, he shared them with us — shared them to succor us in temptation — shared them to acquire "the *feeling* of our infirmities."

We have ordinarily put the stress of our representations of the incarnation upon the relations of this great event to God, — to some aspect of his justice. We can scarcely, indeed, set this subject too high in its relations with the

* In Epistolam ad Hebraeos, Joh. Calvini Commentarius, c. iv., 15.

† Rom. vii. and viii.

necessity of obedience as it stands affected by the divine justice or righteousness. But the passages now brought to our attention exhibit the incarnation in a light of great importance, — that is, in its relations to man, as an evidence to him of the divine love, which is essential, the sacred writers assure us, to any goodness in us;* and as a proof that God did, in fact, *so* love the world.

And what thought can be more exhilarating to beings constituted like ourselves, — what can call forth our affections or our confidence more strongly towards our heavenly Father, — than that, whatever may be the natural evils of our earthly state, the Redeemer came and shared them with us? It is with a new and nearer significance that we contemplate the Saviour's words, "But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *my* Father and *your* Father, and to *my* God and *your* God." (John xx. 17.)

God was truly manifest in our flesh. Nor can we doubt that evil has some valuable design, which will issue both to the divine glory and to the perfection of the saved, — we might say to the perfection of man; for, if the Redeemer is to repair the evils of the fall, as we read, mankind will in its overwhelming multitudes — leaving its lost in considerable relative numbers — rejoice in God.

Dr. Watts has expressed some of these ideas in one of the most beautiful of his lyrics, beginning —

"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair" —

and the subject is worthy of the highest lyrical praises. No theme has ever engaged the attention of the human mind of half such beauty and power. The subject will yet call forth the powers of verse in higher measures, more

* 1 Jo. iv. 19; Rom. ii. 4.

capable of acting upon the human passions than anything to be found in Milton or Collins.

The Saviour has perpetually assumed our nature, and identified himself with it. Our destiny is linked with the great and stupendous purposes of the creation, and linked with him who bore to the world the manifestation of the Father; and we cannot doubt, therefore, that the history of this world will issue in some great and glorious result.

“ Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
 (If ye have power to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
 And let the bass of heaven’s deep organ blow ;
And with your nine-fold harmony
Make up full concert to the angelic symphony.” *

* Milton’s Hymn on the Nativity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEARINGS AND ANALOGIES OF THE CASE.

The Preparatory Condition of Mankind limiting the Population of the Creation at large. — Improbability that the History of the World will soon Conclude. — Cuvier, Lamarck, and the Scriptures. — A Progression from Evil to Good, in Successive Stages, may be discovered in the History of Mankind. — Improvement from Nomadic to Civilized Life. — The Successive Development and Fusion of Particular Civilizations. — Nature of Succeeding Labors. — The Subject pursued without Speculation.

WE may pause still a moment to obtain a clear apprehension of the bearings of the previous considerations — even if renewedly done — upon the subject of a plurality of worlds, and upon the plan of the creation in general.

It is very clear that if the history of mankind, as we can now no longer doubt, is to be used as a great and chief measure for the government of the creation, the universe cannot be very extensively inhabited while the world appears to be still in a preparatory condition as such an expedient. How long this preparatory condition and the world itself are likely to last, will be a subject of future consideration. At present, upon this point, the interesting geological analogy, already once before alluded to, may be more particularly noticed.

If the history of the world should conclude at a period bearing but a small proportion to the time during which the

earth was preparing in the geological ages to become the residence of man, we should have, in the one case, a period immensely long; while we should have, in the other, one extremely brief. The force of this consideration derives great augmentation from the fact that the world shows, in its general and in its minute arrangements, that it was designed from the beginning for the residence of men, or for depraved beings, in their preparatory state. We may derive this interesting and important inference very strongly from the fact that the lowest animal races prefigured in their anatomical structure, and in their instincts — even those which show in embryo a moral character — the more perfectly organized and endowed being who was to succeed and to rule them. Comparative anatomists agree in teaching this interesting fact, so far as it falls within the domain of their instructive science; and which they are capable of maintaining with very clear and convincing demonstrations.* Comparative anatomy and philology have indeed

* The study of comparative anatomy, as some readers may be expected to be informed, which was so brilliantly inaugurated by Cuvier, opened two hypotheses, to account for the extraordinary relations which had been discovered between the animal world in all its extent and man, or for the graduated scale of perfection discovered between the lowest organized beings and man. The fact of these relations was admitted by all. Man stood at the head of the series; and the radiated animals, including the infusoria, or — admitting another department of living beings — marine and fresh water vegetation, were placed at the lowest point. But a series there was; and Linnaeus was justified in putting man in the classification of animals, however preposterous may have been his theoretical design. To account for it, the inventive genius of naturalists, like Lamarck, Geoffrey St. Hilaire, and Darwin (author of the *Zoonomia*), conceived the explanation that the graduated series represents, at each step, not only an order of time, but a natural succession, or derivation; in short, that each degree in the scale arose, by a law of natural development, from the former. This hypothesis, or theory, was ingeniously argued, as it has since been; and has derived great apparent support,

both opened new sources of our knowledge of mankind. The latter carries us like an omniscient eye beyond all the records of history or tradition; the former enables us to

from the development of the fetal being, from rudimental organs (to retain this name for some interesting facts), from the variations of animals, and, though variably, from fossil geology. The author of the *Vestiges of the Creation*—although comparatively unequal to the first efforts of this kind—has shown what can be done with this subject now. But all arguments upon this side of the question come short of producing any evidence that an animal of one kind has actually changed into an animal of another kind. All alterations in a class of beings seem plainly to fall within an observable law of the variation of species; and the range of variation may be very great—greater than we often suspect, as may be exemplified in the wolf and in the infinite variety of dog. But still these changes take place within some very appreciable limits; or else the alterations are of that extraordinary kind which has been called “alteration of generations,” in which an animal, or a bundle of animals, undergoes a series of changes, somewhat resembling the fetal changes, before reaching its perfection.* It is obvious, therefore, that the explanation of the natural growth of animated nature, through all its gradations, is merely theoretical. Another theory may supplant it. And in fact the doctrine of Cuvier far exceeds it in intelligence, though not in ingenuity, and in its capability of embracing all the facts used in the opposite hypothesis, and many more, in a less embarrassed explanation. Man, according to this explanation, is the archetype of the series. Dr. Owen perhaps thinks that some higher form of man in another state of being, or some other order of being, may perhaps stand at the real head; but man is now the visible archetype of nature, the object at which all the lower orders of beings, from radiates to quadrumana, were pointing. It is scarcely necessary to say that it confirms this explanation that the Scriptures teach that man, who came last, was made separately, and was appointed lord of the creation which prefigured him. Nor does geology, or the record of the creation in general, support it less; for each preceding part of the creation was necessary for the succeeding. This theory will derive its complete verification when it is shown, as will be undertaken in the course of these pages, that an illustrative purpose pervades the whole plan of the creation, or a type and archetype do; as, for example, the lower animals, in those instinctive endowments which repre-

* The parthenogenesis of Owen applies only to a part of these curious facts.

penetrate, as regards the past, the plan of the creation, and possibly may cast some light upon the future.

The preparation of the world by cataclysms and by other violent measures, and the endowments of the animal races, combine to show that the earth was designed for a race for whom the mingled lesson of good and evil was to be displayed. It is scarcely conceivable, therefore, that the period of the existence of man upon this planet should not bear as great a proportion to the time in which the earth was preparing for him, as the momentary passage of an insect from flower to flower bears to the time during which the plants were growing. But the geological analogy is two-fold.

No doubt whatever can rest upon the fact that a progression from evil to good has taken place with mankind, and may be discovered in the history of the world. Like the geological eras, each one of which, by whatever convulsions attended, carried the earth further towards its perfection, exactly like them the revolutions which have already occurred in the world — and they have been numerous — may be generally seen to have been beneficial. As far as

sent the intellectual and moral faculties of men, were designed to teach great moral and economical lessons to mankind ; and so of the successive steps of human history, as will be presently noticed again. Light is also shed upon this interesting subject by considering that angels preceded the existence of the animal creation ; and it is reasonable to suppose that the Creator may have intended lessons for them in the successive steps of the animal creation. Nor is there anything objectionable in the conception that these beings, whose power is represented as so great, may have been intrusted with some part of the work of fitting the world ; and that the animal creation may exhibit the successive degrees in which the creative power was exerted through them. (Matt. xxviii. 2. Here the earthquake and the act of the angel are the same thing. See also Gen. xix. 1, 11, 12, 13 ; compare vs. 24.)

we can go back, the knowledge of mankind has been less, the resources of human happiness less, and their virtue less, — for virtue has been upon an ascending scale. This applies to individuals, but much more to man in his collective history.

We may easily discover several distinct stages of progress, which have added some new and important elements for an improved condition of mankind; and it cannot be doubted that, when this interesting subject has been more thoroughly studied, the great periods of human history will arrange themselves in as palpable and in as beneficial connections as the different stratifications of the globe. We may dismiss entirely the consideration of the retrograding portions of mankind, which have lived without emerging from savage life, and consider those who have taken a part in the civilization of the world.

The emergence from the nomadic to the agricultural and commercial life comprises two great steps; each of which was successively taken, except in some rude conceptions. The physical necessities of mankind occupied their first attention — then their social — and afterwards their moral and intellectual culture. All these have also gone up on a perceptible scale. Every great civilization has contributed to its successor. The Asiatic and Egyptian civilizations undoubtedly laid the foundation for that high state of society, and for the elevated intellectual condition, which we find in Greece. The Greek civilization infused itself, during all its periods, into the Roman, or from very early times; and these infusions softened the character of this original and vigorous culture, which has been the foundation of all which have succeeded it. Daniel, in his celebrated prophecy, connects the civilizations of the world

together in his consolidated image, as they have been blended in fact.*

This interesting subject might be more extensively pursued; but we must leave it for our principal task. We will resume the thread of our subject, and take a brief general view of the divine plan as it may be ascertained from the Scriptures. We will direct our attention to the commencement of human history; from which we shall obtain some particular conceptions as to the nature of the plan, its present maturity, and the particulars in which it is still going on. We will in the first place consider the measures which Divine Providence employed for the government of man upon his first introduction upon the stage of existence, in contrast with such as were not employed for this purpose.

It should be premised, that the purpose of this investigation is not speculative, but is to discover the facts upon which alone a judgment can be formed, and to understand them. We shall not seek to know how God *might* or may have made the world and moral beings; but how he did make them. And it is our purpose to conduct the inquiry in such a manner that no person of ordinary understanding or attainments can fail to comprehend the argument in its

* And it is certainly a very remarkable fact, as corresponding with geological events, that some or all the great original civilizations, and which originated in peninsulas or in other isolated situations, away from the great sweep of the wandering nations, were not simple in their origin or in their development, but were the fruits of the contributions of different races. Races have everywhere mingled with beneficial results, when a lower has been brought in connection in this manner with a higher civilization. But unions have taken place upon a much greater scale; when these isolated civilizations, which have produced a character by themselves, have been called forth, like upheaved strata, to mingle in the great mass or current of mankind.

several steps, or the result. We write for man; and not for the learned or studious alone, but for every man, that he may comprehend and bless the wisdom which has appointed his present lot; and that he may lose forever the murmurs which rise in the natural heart against a beneficent providence, in a knowledge of those blessings which it has pleased God to hide from the wise and the prudent through so many ages.

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE PRIMITIVE CONDITION OF MAN.

Want of Experience in the Beginning of Human History. — Inference, showing what Beings were first Created. — Advantages of this World for a Preparatory State. — Difficulty and Danger attending the Condition of the First Moral Beings. — Necessity of Producing an Experience. — In what Moral Evil consists, and how it Existed. — Method of Imparting the First Experience. — Obstacles presented by some Speculative Opinions. — Whether the Nature of Adam, with the exception of Original Sin, was like our own. — Preposterous Conceptions of this Subject. — Adam a Progressive Being. — Whether the Fall of Adam is to be regarded as a Calamity. — Relation between a Metaphysical Hypothesis and a Natural Metamorphosis. — Mysticism and Atheism associated under a Similar Character. — “Image of God ;” Misconceptions of it. — The Practicability of Improving Adam by Abstract Conceptions. — Innate Ideas. — Proper Moral Distinctions not Innate. — M. Guizot, and a Singular Law of our Intellectual Being. — Method of Abstract Ideas. — Sir Joshua Reynolds. — Measure of Law. — Misconceptions of the Adamic State. — Polynesia. — Possibility of Transforming the Character of Christianity by Misconceptions of the Adamic State. — The Real Design of the Tree of Knowledge, a Test. — Dr. Morton. — The Government of Eden not one of Pure Law. — Misconceptions of the Nature of the Levitical System. — The Principle of Justification unchanged in any Age. — Character of a Legal System. — Ideas not Power. — Analogy of Vegetable Growth. — The actual Paradisiacal State ; — viewed as a Preparation for its particular History. — The Purposes for which such a History will be undertaken.

ONE of the clearest impressions which we may derive from the first period of human history, by viewing the case

as it actually was, is that the world was at its commencement *without experience*.

This impression will be confirmed by every mode of attention dependent upon the observation of the facts, which cannot be reconciled with any other explanation. The same want of experience, involving of course a want of culture, must have been the case also of those created moral beings called angels, who existed before mankind. They commenced an existence whose hazard and advantages they were to learn.

The great influence which would have been exerted upon men and angels by a knowledge of the extended experience of other beings who had preceded them, judging from the influence of a knowledge of this kind upon ourselves, must be a consideration sufficient to convince us that such an experience did not exist, or it would have been imparted to them. "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good;" * and it is impossible to conceive that so valuable and necessary a help as the experience of other beings in the dangerous paths of moral obligation, if it was in a state to be communicated, would have been withheld by a good being, who desired the happiness of his creatures. The event proved it to be all-important. The conclusion seems to be unavoidable, therefore, that men and angels, who are the only orders of created moral beings revealed to us in the Scriptures, were the first limited intelligences which had appeared in the creation.

A remarkable confirmation of this belief, that a want of experience constituted the essential defect of the Adamic state, may be derived from the case of the Saviour himself. It is said of him, that he learned obedience by the things which he suffered: "Though he were a son, yet learned

* Prov. xix. 2.

he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. v. 8, 9, compare verse 7.) It is easy to infer, from this remarkable declaration of the apostle, that experience is necessary to confirm the obedience of an innocent being; and such an inference must be made unless we make the passage void of all meaning: and the still further inference may be drawn, that being placed in this world is a suitable condition for acquiring such an experience. The beneficial uses of evil, and the weakness of the Adamic and angelic states, from a want of experience, therefore, are very clearly deducible. This inference will be stronger by considering that there were some difficulties and dangers attending the condition of the first moral beings.

The difficulty of instructing and of governing beings who were, at the same time, commencing an existence of their own, and breaking the ways of a new and responsible moral existence in the creation, must have been very great; and will appear to be so upon every consideration of the variety and force of human passions. As the effort to govern such beings must have been attended also with consequences of vast moment, we may be sure that the wisest course was adopted for this purpose.

We may conceive, in such a case, of the application of measures which would apply to no other condition of moral beings. Such beings could have had no moral ideas of their own; and when there were none to impart, in a universe barren of them, or limited in its experience, it was obviously necessary to produce them: in short, it was necessary to *create* an experience suited to become the basis of a system of moral instruction; and it was proper to effect this end by means adapted to a case so peculiar.

In solving the problem, however, respecting the origin of moral evil, it is impossible at the present stage of the inquiry to discuss the particular question — at least, it is not expedient — whether the fall of Adam might have been prevented or delayed. His fall may have been precipitated or not. But we have already seen that moral evil had an existence in the very nature of his case, as an inexperienced being. Had he remained innocent, therefore, it is impossible that he should have attained at once to a high state of virtue, or have immediately escaped the hazards of temptation; he would have been still in a state of imperfection. We have seen, therefore, the origin of moral evil as a matter of fact. The subject of its *treatment* may be reserved for distinct consideration. In what degree it should be suffered to exist, — since exist it must, if moral beings were created at all, — was a question to be solved by the divine mind, and must be studied by contemplating the facts in the case. Whether moral beings could have been created different from those which have been made, is a question scarcely worthy of attention; yet it will be virtually answered by subsequent considerations. The question would involve the one, whether beings could have been made without voluntary forces and intelligence. In such a case they would have been brutes or plants. It involves the question, also, whether moral beings could have been made with inferior or greater forces of will or understanding. But, if there might have been practicable degrees, there was one particular in which the practicability was invariable. There could never have been any experience until it was produced. In this, also, there could have been no degrees. Nor is it easy to see how smaller or larger forces of a moral nature could have affected the case, except to have retarded or facilitated the acquisition

of experience. The question, however, in this point of view, is incapable of an answer, and is little less than absurd. It is one in which we may repose confidence simply in the Infinite mind.

Several considerations go to show that a correct solution of the case of moral evil, absolutely considered, has been given.

If experience was the first necessity of moral beings, it was proper to preserve such examples as occurred, for the purpose of instruction. The existence of the angels who fell was not immediately extinguished, but was preserved, and was used in the Adamic state, as it has been ever since. We will not, however, dwell upon this case any further, at present, than to observe that the little which was conveyed to our first parents of the experience of fallen angels renders it probable that their rebellion, comprising their pride and independence, was all that was valuable to impart. And a powerful counterpart to it, so to speak, was offered in the interesting communications of the Creator himself, and perhaps of unfallen angels, with our first parents. Several facts — as the declaration which seems to imply that he taught Adam the use of speech, and the statement that the primitive pair, after their fall, *heard* the voice of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and probably as usual — show that the Creator appeared in a human form in Eden; as he frequently did to the patriarchs and to other pious men in the earlier periods of the world. This appears like an attempt to supply in some degree our first parents' want of experience. These cases limit, also, the instruction by an imparted experience, with the exception of an artificial and pantomimic mode, which the wisdom of God devised, and which will be particularly considered when we detail the case of the primitive state.

It must appear evident that God did all, in his personal manifestation, but convey the conceptions of his own mind directly to man. But this was not done; nor could it be done in any other manner than that which has been and is now employed to effect a progressive advancement of mankind. It seems almost needless to observe that ideas are the product of the human understanding acting upon what is presented to it. They cannot be communicated directly to it; and where any culture has existed, they must be communicated, so to speak, through the avenues which have been previously prepared. Astronomy must be taught to a peasant in a very different manner from that in which it may be taught to a philosopher; and it would probably be taught to an angel — supposed to be ignorant of it — in a different manner still. God has always addressed the world through the medium of their passions and experience. The conceptions of the divine mind could not have been imparted in full to an undeveloped human understanding; nor could they have been fully communicated without rendering man divine. We have every reason to suppose, therefore, that all which it was possible to communicate was done.

We will, after outlining the subject in this general manner, notice some of the embarrassments, in which the subject of the fall and of the primitive condition of man has been involved, by speculative opinions, and by some misunderstanding of the Scriptures.

An effectual study of the facts belonging to the condition of our first parents, while innocent, has been obstructed and barred out, by the existence of a speculative opinion, in which the genius of religion, and its real supernatural character, have been, it is believed, very much misconceived. All necessity of instruction by experience would

obviously have been superseded, if the nature of Adam (the *pura natura* of the schools) was essentially different from that which we know that his descendants have at present. It has been strangely conceived, by too long a lingering of scholastic metaphysics, that Adam was furnished with *all* the forces of a perfect moral being, giving him a complete moral character; that, in short, he was endowed with an indefinable power of *nature*, which differs in nothing but terms from instinct, and which would push out his powers in virtuous movements. In fact, the great business of religion is, upon this hypothesis, to restore man to the point from which he descended at the fall.*

Metaphysics has carried the idea of Adam's original innocence to a great point of extravagance, by giving it this character. The conception is altogether too much like the Jewish fables respecting the perfections of the first man, from which we may suspect that it took its origin. We might as well believe that our progenitor was a man of gigantic strength; that he was extremely beautiful, with Caucasian features and complexion; or carry the idea of his perfection to any extent, and believe that he was an erudite chemist and a practical astronomer, without crucibles or retorts or telescopes or mathematics, quite as well as to believe that he possessed an elevated moral character without culture; that he obeyed God with the same instinct with which a bird builds its nest or fishes swim.

* It is instructive to observe to what preposterous lengths a fondness for metaphysical or scholastic reasoning will carry the mind. Adam was in his state of innocence nude, ignorant, without art enough to form a garment, without architecture, and probably without culinary skill. Religion, therefore, according to this preposterous theory, should, as it progresses, reduce mankind to a condition of nudity (an idea which perhaps a Quaker sect have or had), of ignorance and rudeness. In short, the perfection of man would be, in many respects, the condition of a savage.

There is in this case a remarkable confusion of ideas. If the *nature* of Adam was holy, he was constituted in the *elements* of his being very differently from his posterity, and formed more than a different species — an entirely distinct genus of man. The fall of Adam can be accounted for only, according to this doctrine, upon one of two principles. He either changed his nature, — which involves the absurdity of his acting with the capacity of a Creator, — or else the divine power withdrew from him something essential to his perfection and preservation, and remade him. The case is inconceivable. And its refutation establishes the fact that Adam was a progressive being, dependent upon experience for his perfection. He lost his original innocence in the same manner as his posterity acquire their virtues, — by a voluntary action of his will upon the ideas and feelings which were produced within him. No other principle can render Adam and his posterity the same species of beings. Besides, the redeemed and disciplined posterity of Adam in heaven are supposed never to fall. We must admit, therefore, — discarding entirely, for the reasons already given, the idea of any supernaturalism, acting not by the truth or by means compatible with the rational conception of moral character, — that a system in which man is carried up from imperfection with an experience of good and evil, is more effective than the simple and untried innocence of Adam. Nor is this important conclusion, after all, simply dependent upon inference, but it is a statement of revelation itself. The apostle Paul, in affirming that “where sin abounded grace did *much more* abound,” * must be allowed to say that the present condition of man, under the mediation of the Redeemer, is much superior to the original Adamic state. Nothing

* Rom. v. 20.

essential can remain, therefore, to show that the treatment of moral evil itself has been wise, and that the fall of Adam has not been a calamity to the world — taking the widest conception of the entire race in all their preparatory state,

The metaphysical conception of Adam's moral perfection is exactly parallel with examples of natural metamorphosis. An animal with the habits and constitution of a fish, furnished with an apparatus for breathing water, turns at length into a four-footed reptile adapted to move upon the ground. In like manner a worm, by a wonderful process of transformation, changes to a butterfly; and some animals undergo an extraordinary series of alterations before arriving at the mature state. These are all changes by *development* of nature, and not from voluntary force. If it can be supposed that Adam was a being destined from his nature to pass through a change from good to evil, his case was exactly similar.

Besides, the conception of a moral character attaching to the original nature of a creature must embrace the shepherd's innocent flock in the condition of moral excellence, and entitle it, for aught we can see, to praise and reward, and even to an admittance to heaven. The notion of virtue which prevails among mankind is, that it does not consist in nature, but in the voluntary action of the soul. No other opinion is reconcilable with human nature, or with the Scriptures.

In fine, metaphysical speculation, or by whatever name we shall call the opinion which we have been considering, has carried the doctrine of the fall, and of the pristine condition of man, to a preposterous length. Nor is it easy to see how such an exertion of reason, so called, is less an apostasy, as a displacement of the truth, than tradition. If it should be alleged, as a justification for still threading the

airy paths of metaphysics, that the metaphysics of Christendom has been consecrated by extraordinary fervor of piety, it may be rejoined that tradition and mysticism have been also associated with extraordinary sanctity ; and that atheism, which has wielded the phantom-mace of metaphysics with a deicidal intent, has been connected with spotless purity of life. The first man, therefore, was an innocent being in the simplest meaning of this word. He had not sinned, and was without any incitements to sin in his constitution, except such as consisted in his naturally innocent and unperverted passions, and in his limited intelligence or experience. The Westminster Confession of Faith represents him as made mutable ; and so he was.

So far as relates to a misunderstanding of Scripture, anything contrary to these views has been founded upon a very small number of passages, all of which admit of a different explanation. In one of them, man is said to have been made in the image of God.* But this language is in itself very indefinite ; and there is not only no reason to think that Moses restricted it to the moral nature of Adam, but to think the contrary. He applies it to men since the fall, in telling us that the blood of the murderer should be shed because man was made in the image of God.† Men are spoken of, by several of the sacred writers, as still bearing the image of God. “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.” (1 Cor. xi. 7.) “Therewith bless we God, even the Father : and therewith curse we men, which are made in the similitude of God.” (James iii. 9 ; see, also, Acts xvii. 28, 29.)

Two other passages, however, are frequently cited, from

* Gen. i. 26.

† Gen. ix. 6.

the Epistles of Paul, to sustain the opinion which these references correct, so far as one proof by which it is supported goes. Paul, in these passages, speaks of piety as a resemblance to God. But it was quite natural that the apostle should represent the church as in duty bound to aim at conformity to the Divine likeness, since men were made in general, as we have seen the meaning to be, to be like God. There is no reason to think that he intends that piety in any high degree, or knowledge, was lost at the fall. One of these passages is as follows: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. iv. 24.) There is nothing here which affirms anything more than that a truly pious man resembles God. If there is any implied reference in the passage, or in the context, to the loss of any part of the image of God, — as no doubt there is, since man certainly fell from his original innocence and his first obedience, — still, there is nothing which implies that Adam fell from a high state of piety, which is the result of culture now. The second passage is Col. iii. 10. — "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." This is very different from saying that a pious man is exactly restored to the image which was lost in the fall.

Another passage cited, for a similar purpose, is Rom. ii. 14, 15. — "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." But this, if it proves anything for the purpose designed, proves that the heathen are unfallen and holy. The only other passage

commonly relied upon is Eccl. vii. 29. — “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” The word upright, or straight, here used perhaps in a moral sense, undoubtedly conveys the idea that man in general is less pure than when he was originally created. But it is absurd to regard it as teaching that Adam was as high or perfect in moral excellence as the Saviour or unfallen angels, or even Job. His falling under temptation is an evidence to the contrary. Nor can the language that God *made* man upright be taken in the metaphysical sense. The meaning is sufficiently clear when we say that when man was made he was upright, or free from sin. Nothing renders it necessary to suppose that God made him with that character of a moral being, which is now the result of choice and culture. When it is said that “the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. xvi. 4), we cannot mistake one idiom for another so much as to suppose that “to make” is here used in the sense of to create, and draw the inference that God made Adam anew at his fall, or that he makes the wicked with their wicked characters. God is said to do, or to make, in the well-known language of Scripture, what he allows or causes to be brought about.

Having noticed the embarrassments which speculation has cast around the inquiry respecting the origin and permission of evil, we will now consider more particularly the actual condition of our first parents; but in an elementary manner, reserving a more minute and disembarrassed detail to another chapter. We will devote the present chapter to a removal of some embarrassing considerations.

Several methods are conceivable, as being proper to use, for governing the primitive pair, or the first moral beings.

One is by abstract ideas ; and another by statutory regulations.

Example, as we have seen, was used in the extraordinary expedient of the appearance of the Creator in human flesh. All that we read about fallen angels is, that one who had fallen, by assuming the form of a serpent, tempted our first parents. Whether good angels mingled with the lessons of Paradise; we are left only to infer as not impossible from the agency of these beings in every part of the inspired history. The example of fallen angels we may regard as having been withheld from our first parents, with the solitary exception mentioned ; and this particular case will be considered hereafter.

Innate ideas have been conceived to be an expedient actually employed for the government of our first parents.* The doctrine that there are ideas in the human mind requiring only to be called forth, has long been regarded as a visionary subject, having no other foundation than in the capacity of the mind to acquire thought, and in the adaptation of nature to produce it. It is not impossible that the human mind might have the idea of a horse, with its form and uses and organization, if one had never been seen. But it is not less certain that this idea would be produced in parts, and that all the parts of the conception would have been independently produced, and have been the result of observation and of reflection upon matters presented to the attention. Many of the elements of the conception would have been furnished by other minds. The idea could not be said, without great absurdity, to have been born with the person. We would dismiss this imaginary subject altogether, were it not for the lingering

* Philo, according to Dr. Knapp.— See Lectures on Christian Theology.

of a similar conception in regard to the natural moral character of our emotions, and did not an interesting character of our intellectual operations deserve a moment's attention.

Our moral distinctions may be carelessly considered to be innate. Man must have had feeling and sensation before thought. But there is no reason to think that his feelings or emotions could have been denoted by the specific and general distinctions applied to the moral sentiments — as love of justice and the like — until his understanding had comprehended their relations. He might have viewed with equal indifference the cruelty of a tiger and the innocence of a lamb, if he had not been personally interested in any other manner than as a spectator. His attention and curiosity would have been excited, and perhaps he would have been pleased with the chase or with the struggle; and some other instinctive feelings, as revulsion or sympathy, being associated with injury or danger as regarded himself, would doubtless have arisen in his mind upon once or twice witnessing events of this kind. But he would have had no moral feelings or discriminations until he had comprehended something of his own social relations; which may, in fact, have been suggested and shadowed to him from this source. An individual existing alone would have no moral relations whatever. Even in animals, what sometimes surprises us as a rudimental moral nature — as the shame of a dog when detected in a fault — is the result of experience and instruction, and is not instinctive, since it is an individual peculiarity, and not a natural characteristic of the race. A child, also, contemplates the cruelty of a cat with as much pleasure as the frolicking of a lamb, and delights in tormenting the insects imprisoned upon the window-pane as much as it

subsequently does in dressing a doll. Something of this may be undoubtedly referred to what we call infant depravity; nor is there any reason to think that Adam would have taken pleasure in personally tormenting an animal. Still, that he might have been educated to do so is unquestionable. The care required, therefore, in instructing such a being, and the hazards involved in it, are very obvious.

There is a singular law of our intellectual being noticed by M. Guizot,* and called by him the action of our interior being, by which the mind combines and originates thought without the conscious exertion of the voluntary force, but which is still very far from representing innate ideas. Every one must, upon reflection, be convinced that his mind works unconsciously. M. Guizot cites, as an instance, the fact that the anxious student finds himself able to solve in the morning a mathematical problem, which he could not comprehend when he lay upon his pillow, the previous evening. His mind is not simply clearer; but processes sometimes appear to have been wrought out while he was in a state of unconsciousness. This example, however, from what we know of cases of somnambulism, may admit of some doubt as establishing the existence of the power referred to. But upon what other principle can we account for the sudden presentment of new ideas to the mind? — as the result of former efforts of attention, and therefore of combinations, or comparisons, which seem to have gone on in the interior depths of the soul? It is not recollection, recalling what had passed away from the memory; for no such ideas had previously existed in the mind. It can scarcely be called imagination, acting with new force, though much resembling it. It may, for the want of better

* Histoire de la Civilization.

expressions or a better judgment, be called the mysterious intelligence of man, acting without voluntary aid. And, indeed, it is the character of the mind, that it conceives or perceives, while we attend to its acts, frequently ignorant of all its processes. The mind perceives at times more clearly than at others, and laborious processes of thought are forestalled in a moment. Perhaps this is all. Still we think and conceive, we know not how. The metaphysical scalpel has not yet exposed to us all the operations of the mind. We have no disposition to run into mystery, nor to discuss at length this unquestionable power of the mind, by whatever name it may be called. We may dismiss it, therefore, with one or two observations.

This power acts only upon the materials presented, whether good or bad, and is, therefore, remote from any resemblance to innate ideas.

The case throws light upon several subjects of considerable interest at the present time. The intelligence may act by the mere effort of attention, and by exertions of which the mind is scarcely or not at all conscious. The higher consciousness, so much vaunted in the transcendental philosophy, seems to be nothing different from this. Much of transcendental philosophy appears to be a kind of philosophical dreaming.

Mountebanks frequently derive their power to deceive from these remarkable powers of the mind. Great clearness of discernment, as seen in fortune-tellers and in other cases, is unaccountable to those who do not understand the power of the mind in instantaneous perceptions, and is therefore regarded as a prophetic or some other inspiration.*

* The author became acquainted with an unfortunate victim of "spiritualism," of a weak mind, and whose delusion he endeavored to dispel. She had convinced herself, or endeavored to do so, that her mind

Dismissing the subject of innate ideas, as exhibiting one of the actual methods used for governing the first moral beings, we will now consider the method of imparting to them abstract conceptions. A very brief attention only will be required for this subject.

The mind is capable of forming abstract conceptions, by acting upon a few materials; and these conceptions, acted upon by the imagination, may produce an ideal to which the experience would very slowly attain. The history of knowledge shows that abstract conceptions have belonged to very early periods of human exertion, as being easy to form, and as being formed sometimes with dangerous facility. The schoolmen and the Greek philosophers show how powerfully—not always safely—the mind will act by abstract or general conceptions, when the materials of real knowledge are few, or but little considered. The oriental philosophy, once so mischievous in its effects upon religion, was in part the result of a similar exertion of the mind. It would be surprising, however, if the power of the mind to form abstract conceptions had not been used for the government of our first parents. The appearance of the Creator to them must have facilitated their acquisition

had become a passive medium by which spirits made their communications to the world. She was the victim of an expert juggler, who had acquired an extraordinary power over her mind. Her communications, so called, bore evident marks of her own mental habits, and revealed her acquaintance with the ideas which are contained in the ineffable works of Andrew Jackson Davis. This unfortunate woman, finding her mind capable of acting, in a manner surprising to herself, upon the wretched reading to which she was addicted, and gratified with her powers, conceived that the natural force of her intelligence was an inspiration. The nature of her delusion was pointed out to her, as well as its striking resemblance to insanity; since, if she continued to persuade herself that she was not always herself, her delusion was like that of the insane, and might terminate in an hallucination of pure insanity.

of two abstract moral conceptions. They must have early conceived of the obligations of gratitude and of love. Two great elements of moral obligation were, therefore, early conceived.

Yet, if abstract conceptions are easy to form, they do not possess in themselves any great degree of efficacy. Men know what they neither do, nor are capable of performing. It was said by a great artist,* that an art cannot be taught, but that it must be acquired. This is much more true of virtue than it is of accomplishments like the arts of design. Virtue has never been produced by rules; it is a culture, and eminently so. If it may be reduced to a few elementary principles, it is in fact the most complicated subject in the world. Virtue, as a character which attaches to actions, is a variable subject; for what may be virtuous at one time, may become vicious at another. It would have been practically difficult, therefore, or impossible, to have effectually governed the conduct of our first parents by abstract measures alone; nor does it appear that this expedient was mainly used. We will next consider the measure of law.

Statutory measures might seem to be a natural expedient for governing moral beings; and such a measure was, like the former, certainly used. The mind may learn how to fear, when its powers of reasoning are feeble, and its discernments few. Still, such a measure could never be employed as an exclusive expedient; and it was not so employed in Eden. There was only one precept there, and that one was a prohibition. Precepts and prohibitions principally address the interests and fears; it requires, therefore, only a little acquaintance with real virtue—to

* Sir Joshua Reynolds.

which these feelings in any considerable degree are foreign — to justify the limitation of the preceptive measure of Eden to one statute. Besides, statutes can never comprise a complete system of virtue; and are liable, as they descend to minuteness, to misapprehension and perversion. The cumbrous systems of civil law are essentially only an expansion of one principle, that of justice, or a detail of what men owe to one another; and their complication, and liability to perversion, are proverbial. Statutory measures upon a large scale, therefore, would have oppressed, and might have misguided, the feeble intelligence of a man, who was like an infant in intelligence, and who had no fountains of experience from which to draw; and, in fact, they were far from being the chief device of the divine wisdom.*

* Very remarkable misconceptions in general are had of the state of our first parents in Eden; and these, such as they are, for the most part result rather from a want of attention than from any effort of mind directed to this subject. We carry the idea of Adam's natural perfection to an extent which equals him with the highest and most cultivated intelligence of the present. But how incompatible even his external condition was with such a conception, may be made apparent by considering how many things he wanted which belong to the condition of civilized people at present. He had no railroads, nor any roads. He had not learned to train a horse, or yoke an ox, or milk a cow. His dwelling, whatever it was, cannot be conceived to have been a palace of marble or wood. He was ignorant of the use of iron or of any other metal. God, perhaps in burning the sacrifice of Abel, suggested to him the use of fire. If, therefore, we should take an imaginary journey to Eden, and find our first parents absolutely naked, and without the slightest conception of the use of dress, and without the appliances of thread and needle if such a use had been known, and had seen them sitting upon the ground or a stone or a tree-root, and reposing at night on the bare earth or in a cave, we should form no very high expectations of their intelligence; and should expect to find geology and astronomy things unknown to Adam, and Eve as destitute of any cultivated taste as any of her daughters would be without education and self-exertion. We might feel a momentary pain

We have erred as much, also, in our conceptions of the religious economy of Eden, by an equal oblivion of time. The conception pervades our theological literature, that Adam was placed under a system of pure law. "Do this, and live;" or "Do that, and die." It is conceived, also, that the moral law, in its greatest perfection, was instituted from the first, and was enforced upon our first parents. A moment's attention to this subject will facilitate our present inquiries, and aid in settling an important case in theology.

Christianity may undoubtedly be made to wear a particular character, and that character a very false one, from some general conception which overshadows it. It is believed that putting it in a legal dress, and enforcing its most touching doctrine of the Redeemer's love by legal considerations alone, drawn from the Levitical economy, which was itself illustrative, have tended to give religion a harsh and repulsive character, very different from its own nature, as well as from the spirit and belief of those who have given it this dress. Christianity, if the consequences of neglecting or resisting it are terrible to the fool-hardy person who falls into either of these crimes, is very far removed from a legal character. The great power by which it acts upon the human mind and heart is not the stern precept, "Do this, and live," or "Do that, and die." But it is the love of God, manifested in the most affecting

as we saw our progenitors in a material condition not above that of their Polynesian offspring at the present day. Depravity and physical debasement there would not be; but the comforts of civilized life would be wanting. Doubtless, if such a spectacle were actual, we would wish to teach beings so interesting and so artless our own conceptions of comfort and taste. But we should forget that knowledge has been a plant of slow growth, and that our civilization has been the fruit of ages of human experience and culture.

manner; and which, we are taught, is capable, and alone capable, of bringing to true repentance, and of effectually reforming the life and changing the heart.

It is very true that death was threatened to Adam if he broke over one prohibition. This might appear at first, and without particular attention, to impart to the government of Eden a purely legal character. But a little attention will, it is believed, remove this error. It cannot be that nothing besides eating of the forbidden fruit could have produced the divine displeasure, and that nothing else could have caused at any subsequent time the death of Adam. The whole sphere of the duties of our first parents could not have been confined to a single prohibition, leaving nothing positive to be done, and nothing to produce the divine approbation. The regulations of Eden, therefore, were not those of pure law; unless it can be shown that the moral law in all its extent was really instituted there. But the penalty of death was not for breaking the moral law, but for eating of the forbidden tree. What would have happened to our progenitors if they had made an idol, or broken the Sabbath, if it was instituted then, we are not informed; but undoubtedly some corrective measure would have been employed. But correction is not a part of law. It cannot be supposed that our first parents were capable only of the negative parts of a moral character, or of one negative part only, and that all they could do was not to eat of the tree. It cannot be supposed that they would have been incapable of keeping the Sabbath, or of doing any other positive duty, and that they were wholly incapable of regulating their affections. It must be obvious, therefore, that it is a misconception to regard the paradisiacal state as one of pure law. The prohibition must be regarded as simply a test; and it will

subsequently be seen to bear the character of a test, designed to bring the case of our first parents to an immediate issue.

A few observations, it is believed, will confirm these ideas. The statement of a single fact would indeed seem to be sufficient to settle this case, namely, that we read of only one precept in Eden, and have no reason to think that there was any more.

It might indeed be alleged — although it would be by abandoning the ground usually taken — that absolute perfection can never be the rule of condemnation, although it may be a standard of duty or an object of aim. Nor is it easy to see how to avoid an assent to this statement. As a matter of fact, the system of morals which now characterizes the entire collection of the Scriptures was, as has been frequently observed,* gradually formed. Some things, now regarded as criminal, were once not positively forbidden by any statute; and, indeed, were obligatory, in some degree, if the human race was to be propagated. If mankind are all descended from one pair, the marriage of brother and sister was the necessary result of the constitution of the sexes and of the appointment of marriage; and was a *duty*. Incest, therefore, so far as relates to a commerce between brother and sister, has *become* a crime, simply from the increase of the human race and the development of society; otherwise, it would be as innocent now as it was formerly.† These observations seem to be just;

* Particularly by Dr. Leonard Bacon, of New Haven, Conn.

† Dr. Samuel George Morton, the author of “*Crania Americana*,” and of other ethnological and anatomical works, conceived that the apparently plain scriptural doctrine of the derivation of mankind from one pair was very preposterous, as involving this consequence; and proposed, accordingly, the following amendment of the Catechism:

Question. “Whence came the curse called primal sin?”

Answer. “By Adam’s race breeding in and in.”

and if they are so, it does not follow that the one prohibition of Eden came up to the entire capacity of our first parents. It did not embrace the elementary principles of virtue any further than obedience is one. It did not inculcate, except indirectly, the obligation to love God supremely, nor the other part of the moral law. But it cannot be supposed that our first parents were incapable of fulfilling these obligations in any degree. It is plain, therefore, that the government of Eden was not that of a pure legal system, and that the prohibition not to eat of the forbidden fruit was not the institute of such a system.

It has been frequently supposed, by an equal or even a greater error, that the Levitical economy was a purely legal system. It was undoubtedly so, and only so, in an illustrative sense. We are informed that its intention was to show the character and effects of a legal economy; to show its inefficacy, and to constitute a preparation for the dispensation of the Redeemer. But it could not have been a purely legal system, viewed as the only principle by which men were dealt with, if we are to understand the moral law in the manner in which it was explained by the Saviour to the young ruler, who had literally kept all its precepts from his youth. Taken in this way, with a spiritual meaning so called, no man ever did or ever could live by the law. Paul called it "the ministration of death." * "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, the just shall live by faith." (Gal. iii. 10, 11.) Men were therefore saved under the old economy by faith and grace as well as

* 2 Cor. iii. 7.

now. "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound." (Rom. v. 20.) Whether the word here rendered "entered" means "to come in at the side" or "sur-reptitiously," or "to come in addition to something,"* it denotes that a legal system was a novelty in the divine arrangements; that it had no previous, and will have no subsequent existence; and it very plainly tells us its purpose. It was to show the magnitude of sin as an evil, and the tendencies of the human heart in this way; and to show these tendencies, we may presume, by means of a system of positive regulations. The Hebrew race, in all their history, while living under the law, show the difficulty — or rather, we are justified in saying, the impossibility — of governing and of improving men effectually by a system of law alone.

Indeed, as we have seen, it would be a mistake to suppose that men were ever essentially governed upon any other principle than one of grace; by which we mean, the system of evangelical government, in which the love of God is the great force. Men have been saved by grace in all ages. A part of the reasoning of Paul, when demonstrating by his powerful argument the necessity of faith, is, that a system of law, as the only governing principle, addresses self-interest, and cannot, therefore, be admitted as a principal measure in the divine economy. Such reasoning applies as well to an unfallen as to a fallen state. Moral beings can never be governed exclusively by a principle which does not admit of their greatest elevation, or which would allow them to boast before God, as the apostle tells us would be the effect of a legal system.† A legal system would put in a condition to demand as a right the

* See Wahl and Doddridge.

† Rom. iv. 2.

aid of God. God would become, upon such a principle, the paymaster, or rather the servant, instead of the Father of his creatures. A legal system would also necessarily generate and authorize the pursuit of happiness. But the supremacy of this principle can never be admitted without subverting the entire moral character. The law in its nature is "a ministration of death" everywhere. The principle of evangelical virtue is, that duty is substituted for happiness, as a governing principle, and that this substitution is made in view of the excellence of the divine character, and of the certainty of his love. It is a most touching, as well as a most philosophical, statement of the Scriptures, that "we love Him because He first loved us" * Reward, therefore, is adjusted under such a system not as an end, but as an encouragement. No legal system can frame itself upon any principle of this kind. Its rewards are payments and equivalents. It cannot propose duty as an end, but as a means; and obviously contracts the principle of virtue into a mean and calculating selfishness. Nor can it offer the love of God as the prevailing motive; for the divine affection, so far from coming full and earnest to the creature, comes through the chilling medium of statutes, and is also a good to be earned. We shall not find the principles of this objectionable and narrow philosophy applicable to any measure employed by Infinite Wisdom for the government of Adam. The threatening of death which was made does not involve the institution of a system of law, since penalties are used in domestic government where no one would conceive that a legal system is or ought to be dominant. We love and obey our parents as we love and obey God; because, as a matter of fact, they first love us. Genuine obedience and

* 1 John iv. 19.

duty are the, so to speak, spontaneous, and not calculating, reciprocations of love. It may be further urged, as an objection to a legal system, that ideas are not power, and can scarcely be called knowledge. The mind may possess very correct notions upon subjects of taste and morals, — and our ideas upon such subjects always exceed our actual attainments and our capacity also, — while their authority must come to us from a source deeper in our nature, deeper than the superficial perceptions of the understanding, to acquire all their power. They must be invested with habit and experience practically to command us. It has been observed by an anonymous writer, with great and original force, that the moral powers of the world are first ideas, then opinions, and are subsequently wrought into customs, maxims, and institutions of society. In this last stage they acquire their real power. They then become the proper subjects of knowledge. Previous to this they had too much the character of speculations.* This very valuable observation, which is capable of important practical use in the prosecution of reforms, is amply attested by experience. The moral power which one generation possesses over another is due to the fact that it succeeds it, or that ideas which originated in former generations have become matters of its education and actual experience. The blood and sweat of martyrs have infused a new invigoration into humanity; and the enthusiastic dreams of prophets, perhaps ridiculed as Quixotism, have now become matters of common and familiar life. The ideas of the martyr and of the prophet are now to be found in the nursery and in the common school, and are becoming imbedded in the stratas of society. Like the fallen showers of heaven, they now

* The title of the book in which I first met with these ideas has escaped my recollection, and the work is not now in my possession.

make their way upwards into the growing substance, and push forth the moral beauties and the fruitfulness of the world. And other ideas are elaborating in secret, like the tree-bud or the seed, to put forth their powers in a congenial air or soil in another age. Thus one generation cometh and another goeth, but each laden with spoils of other generations, and with riches of its own acquisition. "And herein is that saying true," said the Saviour, "One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor; other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." *

The actual Paradisiacal state may therefore be very readily conceived. It is clear that preceptive regulations were not the principal measure employed in the primitive condition of mankind. It is obvious, also, that the elemental need of man, as a moral being, was to be convinced of his Maker's wisdom and love. When these conceptions were, so to speak, wrought into his convictions and experience, his safety and progress would have been alike assured. The aim of the divine wisdom seems actually to have been to call forth towards itself this confidence, and with it the chief affections of the creature.

The attainment of this judgment upon the primitive condition of man, or probability, if it is at present deemed no more, prepares us for its confirmation, as well as for the complete establishment of the fact that the weakness of the primitive condition consisted in a want of experience, in contemplating the particular and interesting history of the Adamic state.

* John iv. 37, 38.

CHAPTER X.

A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST PERIOD OF HUMAN HISTORY, AS SHOWING THE ORIGIN OF MORAL EVIL, AND THE RELATIONS OF THIS SUBJECT WITH THE EXTENT AND DESIGNS OF THE CREATION.

The Physical Character of Eden. — Interest belonging to the Contemplation of its Inhabitants. — The Personal Endowments of Adam. — Not intended to Sin. — Distinction between Sin and Moral Evil. — Moral Evil an Incidental Act of the Creator. — The Fall of Adam probably also contemplated. — Wisdom of the Arrangement. — Particular Measures for the Improvement and Happiness of Adam. — A Feeling of Responsibility awakened. — Institution of Labor. — Eden not a Tropical Country. — The Effects of Agricultural Pursuits in promoting a Knowledge of God. — Manifestation of God in a Human Character to Adam. — Benevolence of this Manifestation. — Shamanism. — A Revelation made in Eden. — Sublime and Affecting Manner in which this was done. — Origin of the Account of the Creation. — Endowment of Adam with Power. — The Solitary Statute of Eden, and its Design. — Meaning of the expression “Morning and Evening.” — Incidental Evidence that the Affairs of the World are deeply involved with the Purposes of the Creation. — The Tree of the Temptation apparently endowed with some Intoxicating Property. — Benevolence of a Test. — Principles involved. — Reasons for the Admission of the Tempter. — Restrictions under which it was allowed. — Eve Ignorant of the Nature of the Serpent. — Nature of the Fall. — Why it was expedient to continue the Existence of Man after the Fall. — Extraordinary Preparations for his Trial. — Instructions imparted in Natural History. — The Origin of Language. — Condition of the Animals in the Gallipagos and Falkland Islands. — Moral Instructions imparted from the Animal Creation. — Death of Animals before that of Man —

Whether Adam was made Immortal. — Creation of Eve. — Influence of the Domestic State upon the Birth of the Moral Sentiments, and upon Civilization. — Adam and Abraham compared. — Example of a Young Man of the Town of Chartres. — Evidence that this World is the Source of a Great Moral Dominion, and the Effectiveness and Perfection of its Lessons.

FROM the allusions in the prophets,* it is not improbable that the original abode of man was in a rocky and volcanic country. If this was the case, the approach from without to their garden, in Eden, would have resembled very much the somewhat rugged course which we have taken to arrive at the present point of our inquiry — the condition of our first parents in Eden.

We may now, however, contemplate the actual arrangements made for the happiness of the primitive pair, and view the first or principal attempt of divine wisdom to govern a moral creation. Here, in fact, we find the origin of moral evil, as regards the world; and here we certainly may contemplate the commencement of a government which we have seen to extend, in its design, over the creation: a government which associates with itself many extraordinary measures, and whose stupendous designs no causes will ever defeat. The subject of evil should be studied in its beginnings, and all theories should be suspended until the elements of the subject lie fully before us. Among these elements we should undoubtedly include the fall of angels, and the geological fact, from which our attention cannot be averted, that evil was coëxistent with the origin of the globe.

As to the personal endowments of Adam, we cannot have any doubt that they were such as were suited to a being intended for virtue and happiness, and who was at the

* See Ezekiel xxviii. 12, &c.

same time to commence the momentous history of mankind. What, however, his peculiar endowments were, we have very limited means of knowing. He could not have been a man of mean understanding, to have been engaged in acts which will come under our notice. One fact alone, that he was not deceived in the temptation, must place his powers of understanding at a very high point, and lead us to infer that his imagination was not his governing faculty. He was capable, therefore, of "pondering the path of his feet;" and if all his "ways" were not "established," it could not have been from anything defective in his natural endowments.

We may infer, from the divine nature, that God would not so have constituted Adam as to have brought back upon himself the reproach of his fall. God "cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man;" and he would not have constituted our first parent in such a manner that his fall would have been the result of a temptation to all intents and purposes provided for in his nature. Dr. Paley has observed, that there is nothing in the present constitution of mankind solely intended to produce pain; and a similar remark may be made in regard to the original constitution of man as respects sin. We shall search in vain to discover anything which would lead us to conceive that the Creator intended Adam to sin. If our teeth were made to eat and not to ache, still a provision for pain as an admonitory or retributive evil was made in the human organization. But pain is the *result* of some physical transgression, while sin is a transgression itself. It is nothing which God could have created; and if man was forced to act contrary to a divine precept, the author of the violence, and not its victim, would be the transgressor. No sin is conceivable under such circumstances. This

subject has been much confused by speculations upon the will, which have themselves been sufficiently confused. But the problem is not, surely, how the Creator sinned in Adam, but how a being made in the image of God committed an act which was sinful. If the human soul was so constituted that it could not at any time have acted otherwise than it did, then the real cause, in a series of causes and effects, must be the first cause. The first link in the chain, or the author of it, must be the cause. The Creator in such a case would be both the author of the sin and of the sinner. A search for the origin of sin, upon the principles of this philosophy, we shall not attempt.

The question, however, respecting the existence of moral *evil*, is different from that of the origin of sin. In every condition of inexperience there must be some moral evil. Anything falling below an absolute standard of moral perfection must be an evil. In this sense God may be regarded as the author of evil, since he made man inexperienced, and could, in fact, have made him in no other manner.

Nor is there any obstacle to conceiving that, while God may be supposed to have foreknown, he may also have designed, the early fall of Adam. The admission of the tempter looks like a design to precipitate the Adamic experience. Nor is the case by any means inscrutable. The example of angels must be allowed to prove that the hazards of moral beings, in the infancy of things, are very great; and, together with the example of Adam, and the nature of the case of an inexperienced being, must show that sin would occur in such cases. This subject, however, will be more particularly discussed when the temptation is brought particularly under view.

At present, the inference is very probable and serviceable, that the best possible scheme of a moral government was soon

attended with consequences which were inseparable from the design, and which divine wisdom knew how to control. This inference is not too strong, when we consider the infancy of the creation as an established fact, and contemplate the relations of this world with all others. We must, however, contemplate the problem of evil chiefly, and to all intents and purposes altogether, in relation to mankind. The great problem lies in this compass, and the facts in the case will be seen, therefore, not to be so remote from our grasp.

The measures taken for the management of Adam were precisely such as we should conceive might have been attempted with a being whom it was designed to render virtuous and happy by the best and safest modes of culture. These measures proceeded manifestly, also, upon the principle of producing, in the most direct way, the greatest amount of salutary knowledge and experience. Adam was, in the first place, put in a garden containing a supply of his earliest wants. He was surrounded with objects which were adapted to bring into being, from their variety and nature, the tastes and feelings by which the human faculties enter into a mysterious combination, as it were, with external nature; and which constitute, also, like other emotions, from the unobserved manner of their production, the nearest approaches to abstract ideas in the human constitution.*

The power of feeling responsibility was immediately addressed, by the direction "to dress" the garden and

* As to the time during which our first parents sojourned in the garden, a very absurd writer conceives that Adam fell the first day of his existence, and precisely at the hour of noon. We have no means of determining the case except by the events, which must have taken some time.

“to keep it.” Here, also, was the first institution of labor. We have no reason to think, therefore, that Eden would have supplied spontaneously all the wants of man. Man is introduced in the creation with the remark that “*there was not a man to till the ground.*” We have no evidence that the plantain or the bread-fruit, or any other vegetable, by which the degenerated and ulcerated inhabitants of the Pacific support a useless existence, grew in Eden. The fig was one of the fruits of Paradise, as we are told that our first parents attempted to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, as the indolent Polynesians make use, for the same purpose, of a material obtained from the pandanus or mulberry or cocoa-nut. The fact, indeed, that the Creator made our progenitors, as it is said, coats of skins to clothe them, would leave the natural inference, if we had no other knowledge of the subject, that the climate of Eden was not tropical, since clothing of such consistency was demanded.

At all events, Adam was furnished with employment : a condition of existence without which happiness, in any degree above brutal enjoyment, is obviously unattainable, and virtue impossible in any state of being, either present or future. If heaven is sometimes conceived of as a voluptuous rest, or one in which all labor and all responsible exertions cease, nothing so unreal and so visionary is taught us in the Bible. Dreams of this kind belong more to the cloister than to those whose religion is rational and scriptural.*

The dignity of labor, therefore, was consecrated in Paradise ; and the first and only innocent man, except the

* George Whitefield is said to have ridiculed the dreamy conception which some had of the heavenly state, “as though the enjoyment of heaven was that of being seated upon a bright cloud and singing religious songs or ditties forever.”

Saviour, spent a portion of his time in manual toil; and the Saviour himself, in a different sphere, — that of a teacher with miraculous powers, — “went about doing good.” Nor is there any reason to doubt the correctness of the tradition, since his parents were poor, — and we cannot suppose that he was brought up in idleness, — that he worked at the trade of his reputed father, and made “ploughs and yokes” in his youth.

It is pleasing to contemplate the first man as taming the wild luxuriance of the garden, and as exerting his intelligence and taste in its culture. Without doubt, Parādisē would have been more lovely, and more productive, had the taste of woman and the genius of man unfallen continued to act upon it for a succession of ages. The rose would not have remained undetected in its modest seclusion by the eye of Eve, and would have been taught to ascend the sides of her dwelling to disperse its fragrance upon the air, and to embalm the repose of its inhabitants. Nor would those powers of nature, by which man has since risen to empire over the external world, and which have so much changed the physical and moral aspect of the world, have been altogether undiscovered by the utilitarian eye of Adam.

The institution of labor, also, had an obvious tendency to render man better acquainted with his Maker. With every new experience of the powers of nature, the first man would have new evidence of his Maker’s love and power. We learn much now to the same effect from this source. The vegetable and floral world furnishes one of the richest and purest studies of the human mind. It has been said that none but pure minds are fond of flowers. Certainly, a beautiful flower is an emblem of taste and innocence; and happy was it that the first man was first brought in connection with the botanical world.

A sense of responsibility, as associated only with interest, was calculated to be produced by the necessity of cultivating the garden. The necessity of working was impressed upon our progenitor. His labors every day were adapted to induct him to a sense of his duties, and of the worth of their performance. We cannot but admire the divine wisdom and benevolence in thus revealing his will, in a way as remote as possible from mere general conceptions.

We have already noticed the probability that the Creator appeared in a bodily form to our first parents. The language "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,"* may mean the sound of thunder heard at different points, as the expression "the voice of the Lord" unquestionably does sometimes denote in the Scriptures. But it denotes in this case more; it is the herald of the divine approach. When they heard it, our first parents "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord." God addressed them immediately; which might, as in all the cases in which God is represented as talking with Adam, imply a human form. But the fact that the human form was used in intercourse with the patriarchs, is conclusive enough to show that God appeared in a human shape to the first man. He manifested himself by the sound of a voice, and by conversation, we cannot question.

Indeed, we can readily conceive how unfortunate it would have been had the mind of Adam struggled through uncertainties to a very imperfect conception of God, and a play of doubts upon the most important of all subjects had commenced the exertions of human intelligence. From what we know of the powers of the human mind upon this subject, we cannot doubt that a knowledge of the Creator

* Gen. iii. 8. Compare Ps. xxix. with Ps. lxxvii. 18.

would scarcely have been attained ; and the Shamanism of the Mongol nations, the adoration of the objects of nature, or even the fetish worship of Asiatics and Africans, would have been the first religion of the world.

The first need of man was undoubtedly a revelation ; and this great want was supplied. God communicated with Adam, and it was at least under human conceptions. Man can acquire no conception of God except by transferring his own experience upon a magnified scale. The conception which the most cultivated mind has of God is only that of human attributes divested of weakness and sin, and raised to infinity. God is, therefore, very fitly revealed to us in the Scriptures under a human image, as having hands and feet, and as being jealous and angry.

If it is a fact, then, as is highly probable, that God appeared in a human form to Adam, the case is deeply interesting and affecting. There is a tenderness and a sublimity in the conception that those exalted attributes, never separated in our minds altogether from a human dress, should have been assembled in a body, like a man's, to the actual view of the first man, as afterwards occurred with his posterity. The history of religion, indeed, contains subjects surpassing in interest and in dignity anything to be found in the common records of man.

We cannot fail to see that Adam was furnished with the greatest possible proof, for such a being, of the love of his Maker. Every developing power was appealed to by some constant proof of the divine forethought and affection. It was not in the austere form of mere absolute authority and power, therefore, that we are taught by the narrative to conceive that the Creator impressed his dominion upon the mind of Adam. It was as invested with affections that the Infinite Father, step by step, endeavored to call forth

the confidence and affection of his human son. In Eden, therefore, that great moral basis was laid upon which the whole structure of the creation's virtues is to stand, and which is conveyed in the words, richer than all the philosophical systems of antiquity, "We love him because he first loved us." It is pleasing, when we think of the distance which now separates the sinful posterity of Adam from their Maker, of the impiety which dethrones him, and of the blindness which substitutes a human confidence for the power and love of God, — it is pleasing in this case to contemplate the intercourse of the Creator and of his inexperienced and unfallen son in Eden. Sin had not then compounded the poisonous draught which has turned into fear the confidences of man; which has metamorphosed the love of his devotion to awe, and compressed the warm currents of affection into the narrow and chilling channel of selfishness. Neither had the Creator retired, as it were, behind a cloud, and commanded the thunder to utter his will, and the electrical flash to convey terror to the soul of the guilty. The beast of prey had not yet received his commission to dispute with man the dominion of the world, and to watch him and surprise him from his hidden lair. Every untamed savage of the forest or of the jungle probably respected his naked form and fearless innocence. Nor had the Creator intrusted to the glittering array of heaven, nor to the beautiful verdure and flowers of the earth, the communications of his love. The throat of the thrush did not warble forth its mysterious hymn of praise alone. But the Creator himself was audibly, perhaps visibly, conversant with his creature. In some of those divine communings "in the cool of the day," perhaps a natural songster, unappalled by the presence of the Creator, joined its own melodies upon a neighboring or distant twig with the voice

of its Maker. Lovely scene! to expand into the graver communings of the creature with the Creator; in which the Deity would withdraw into greater and higher grandeur, and even rise into mysteriousness, while the intercourse of the diminished, but at the same time elevated creature, would be none the less familiar, but infinitely more blissful.

A part of the divine communications to Adam doubtless consisted in imparting to him a general knowledge of the dominion to which it was the design of the Creator to raise him. Indeed, from what more probable source was the whole narrative of the creation derived, than from the communications made to Adam, and transmitted from person to person? The particular institution of the authority of the first man over the world was strikingly adapted to impress him with a sense of his Maker's goodness, and to produce a feeling of dignity and pleasure, as he cast his eye over the world as his own and as the patrimony of his children. Adam was not intended to labor as a servant, without hope, but as a son, and the fruit of his exertions was his own.

But Adam was not made the lord of the creation without responsibility, nor installed as a tyrant over the lower animals. His developing capacity needed early to be taught the necessity of governing the desires, and of regulating them under a conception of the supreme dominion of God. A particular and very interesting mode was adopted for imparting instruction upon this very difficult subject. In the statutory regulation, not to eat of a particular tree, called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, obligation was fully and formally instituted over the mind of man, as was undertaken to be so unconsciously done by means of his affections. The tree to which this solitary statute was attached may have been, as we might infer from the allusions of the prophets to "the tree of life" as being planted

upon either side of the river of life, a *species* dispersed in various parts of the garden, and therefore often exposed to the eye of man.* This tree, whether single or a species, may have been particularly selected for its properties; since we can scarcely suppose that such a prohibition would have been attached to a tree whose fruit was altogether unexceptionable as an article of food. If it was a tree of deleterious properties, we may easily account for the shame with which our first parents are represented as having been seized after the fall. Some exhilarating property of the tree, unfavorable to the regulation of the passions, may have produced this emotion, and led to the procurement of fig-leaves to cover their nakedness.

It would be a hazardous guess to suggest any existing tree as having been the tree of the temptation, since none seems to answer altogether the characters which it appears to have had. Very likely the species is extinct, and is not found either among the palms or the *myristicaceæ*, among which are trees "pleasant to the eyes," and capable of con-

* The designation of a species in this collective manner, as a tree, as is certainly the case with "the tree of life," exhibits a character of the Hebrew language which assists us in determining the meaning of the words "evening and morning" in the same account. A generic meaning may attach to these words, as including many mornings and evenings. The literal rendering in the 5th verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis is, "and there was evening and there was morning, day one." It is obvious that, in this way of speaking, many evenings and mornings might have been intended. It can scarcely be doubted that a hebdomadal drapery is cast around the creation for the purpose of connecting with it a religious design, — that of commending a stated repose from labor, for the purposes of religious meditation and improvement. In this case, the Sabbath, or the Lord's day, — not as a ceremony, but as a day of bodily rest, — was recorded upon the monuments of the creation. *The whole creation* is enveloped with the drapery of the week and of the Sabbath; and we may therefore possess another evidence that the affairs of man are principally involved with the great purposes of the creation.

fusing the passions. The idea of partial inebriation is suggested by the account of the fall. Intoxicating beverages "open the eyes," and are "desired to make one wise."

Nevertheless, sin and a sense of wounded honor were born in that unhappy hour when the inhabitants of Eden took the forbidden fruit, whether cast down before Eve by the serpent who had ascended the tree and eaten before her, or plucked with her hands. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." This is a faithful picture of the debasement and misery which ensue when the animal passions pass over the bounds of innocence; and we have evidence, also, that Adam and Eve were constituted essentially like the human race in general. Satan, it may also be observed, is still disguised in the tree, and we may add the grain; and his temptations, when effectual, have wasted the earth like the sweep of a tempest. The minerals of the mine may have furnished the instruments of destruction; but the fruits of the earth have been perverted to a more destructive effect. Where one has perished upon the field of battle, scores have suffered and died from criminal indulgence. An enemy falls by the sword or by the bullet, but the victor himself is slain by the cup.

The prohibition of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" must undoubtedly be regarded *as a test*. It might, therefore, have precipitated a crisis in the history of man, as it was calculated to do. Still, the test was no earlier than the existence of temptation in every power of Adam. He might have fallen, in effect, without such a test, by the insidious growth of feelings and habits which would have produced an actual severance between himself and his Maker; and his fall, by such imperceptible degrees, would have been attended with much less remorse of conscience.

If the divine forethought anticipated a fall, or its equivalent, in an imperfect religious character, it was desirable that the first event in an approach to such a condition, or in its manifestations, should be marked by some signal calamity; that the line between good and evil should be distinct when it first appeared; and that the passage of the boundary should be loudly and terribly proclaimed, as it was. Eve evidently was not sensible of her danger, even when wandering from the precept of her Maker, under the very tree of the prohibition, so insidious was the march of evil upon an unsophisticated and inexperienced nature. The prohibitory statute, therefore, did not exceed the necessity of the case. The prohibition had in this view a highly benevolent character. We read also that, after her own temptation, Eve, with an exhilarated fancy, proceeded directly to seduce her husband, in the full confidence of inviting him to personal honor and advantage. She, the Scriptures inform us, "was deceived;" but "Adam was not deceived." * If Adam was capable of breaking over the divine precept, against the convictions of his understanding, and resigned himself to the doom of death rather than lose his companion, it is obvious that the dangers of an inexperienced being, endowed with the affections necessary to have constituted him a moral agent, must have been very great. There was everything, therefore, benevolent in the appointment of the tree as a warning and as a test.

It seems necessary at this point to consider the admission of the tempter to the garden. This subject may seem to be invested with extraordinary difficulties. But the seeming is much greater than the reality. God did not unquestionably let loose an enemy upon the inexperienced pair with an indifference to their happiness. It is conceivable

* 1 Tim. ii. 14.

that he may have designed to increase the virtue of the test. He may have designed or contemplated their fall; but we have no reason to think that the tempter was any more powerful than the thousand or million influences which would have beset the happiness and innocence of our first parents. Satan was only, as it were, an embodiment of these temptations, or was less even than such. We have already seen that if the fall had not occurred, or if man had not lost his innocence in the way he did, an imperfect moral condition would necessarily have existed. It was better that a plan should be instituted, like that which now exists, in which man would commence in evil, knowing it to be such, with the disorder of his nature and the word and providence of God alike condemning it, than that from a state of innocence he should corrupt himself, with feeble convictions of the evil. Our natural depravity, and the Adamic history, may now both be called an experience of great value. The mystery of the fall, considering it as a part of the divine plan, vanishes in this way of viewing it, and becomes an event, regarding it as belonging to the providence of God, benevolent and beneficial in its character. But the benevolence of God in the admission of the tempter may also be seen in some other particulars.

The providence of God evidently controlled this case, and cast around it some singular restraints. Let us recollect, that when the tempter appeared, he did so undisguisedly, as the enemy of God. He appeared in the deceitful character of a friend of man, but with the avowed design of breaking down their confidence in God, and of withdrawing the pair from His service. He charged God with making a false threatening, which he did not mean to fulfil; and with the design of keeping our first parents in a state of ignorance. "And the serpent said unto the

woman, ye shall *not* surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." *

The tempter, therefore, appeared in the only character in which he was probably permitted to appear, *as an example of sin*. And this example was permitted under the meanest and most suspicious of animal forms. It is not improbable, and is altogether likely to have been the case, that Eve regarded the serpent as acting in its proper character. She speaks of the serpent as having beguiled her, and not of an insidious enemy having done so under this character. She may appear to us simple, in thinking that a serpent could communicate ideas and utter words, or in not thinking otherwise. Certainly the weakness of the temptation in itself appears very striking, in the fact that a serpent speaking and reasoning like a rational creature was highly calculated to awaken suspicion. That it awakened none, or that the suspicion was overborne by her desire for the advancement of her husband, shows that her susceptibility to temptation was great, and demanded a test. We can scarcely doubt that Satan was restricted to the form he took. We possess evidence in the Scriptures that it has never been in the power of fallen angels to take any form, at their pleasure. When expelled from the bodies of men, by the Saviour, they needed permission to enter the bodies of swine. At least, there was a propriety in restricting the tempter, if such was the case, to the form of a mean reptile, upon which nature has impressed the character of a culprit, shy in its movements, as dreading detection, and justly denoted as "subtle above all the beasts of the field," from the unexpectedness of its attacks, and the terrible

* Gen. iii. 4, 5.

vengeance which it inflicts for an unintentional injury ; — an animal also disagreeable in its movements, and repugnant still more from the chilly sensation produced by its contact with the human skin.*

It is not unreasonable, also, to suppose that the arts of the tempter were restricted to the particular tree of the prohibition, though the cunning of the adversary might possibly have chosen this spot in order to break down the terror of the statute. Still, the difficulties cast around the temptation were many, and success was not attained by breaking through the understanding of Adam. The primitive man was not deceived. He did not deny his Creator's goodness, nor doubt his power. He did not set up a rebellion from his own instigation, from pride or self-importance. He yielded to other causes. Nor could anything more effectually show that the weakness of Adam consisted in his want of experience.

Since, also, the fall was from weakness, and was not a pure act of malicious wickedness, the Creator undoubtedly had important reasons for banishing the man, and for continuing his condemnation. It is not with us, upon any sound principle of reasoning, to say that the man, fallen from weakness and from his passions, might not have been set up again and tried anew. The doctrine of atonement does not oppose this idea, since it emanated from the love of God, and not from an abstract principle of justice ; and the divine pity might have raised the fallen man in some

* The fact that the serpent is included by name among the beasts of the field, is a sufficient refutation of the opinion that the domestic animals were alone known to Adam in Eden. It may also be observed that the idea of subtilty, or cunning, may be applied to the serpent from the peculiarity of its movements, which seem to require much skill, from its want of the ordinary means of locomotion.

way again, and tried him anew. But such was not the good pleasure of God. And we may believe that it was safer to admit the tempter, under a restricted form, than to trust an inexperienced being to the play of various and complicated emotions, which it would have been impossible to have regulated completely by statutory provisions; and when a moral deflection occurred, from whatever cause, that it was better to pass by the principle of paternal correction and forgiveness, purely considered, and to act upon a scheme by which experience is, as it were, imbedded in the fallen nature itself, and by which it can be acquired also in an impressive manner under the provision of a remedy. It was better that temptation should be embodied in the form of a living being and a visible enemy, than that it should come in insidious and scarcely perceptible ways only.*

* From the address to the serpent after the fall, it appears evident that our first parents had no clear conception that the serpent acted otherwise than in its proper character. There has been deemed to be something singular in the curse pronounced upon this animal, that it should go upon its belly and eat dust all the days of its life. It has been conceived that its form has been changed. Nor is this impossible. Serpent-like animals, with feet or other powers of locomotion, different from those of the common serpent, are more rare now than in former ages of our planet. But it must impress every one that the common serpent moves with difficulty upon the land. Whoever has seen it swim, must have noticed that it performs its movements in the water with greater ease. The idea suggests itself that this class of animals was intended chiefly to live in the water; and that it has been so generally confined to the land, as at present, only since the fall. This may explain the significance of the words, "upon thy belly shalt thou go, and *dust* shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

It may be still further observed, in regard to the temptation, that had Satan appeared in his proper nature, instead of in the form of a serpent, his power over our first parents would have been dangerous. Particular modes of presenting examples may, therefore, be too hazardous to be attempted.

But if the tempter was admitted to Eden, and if God had any contemplation of the fall as a great governmental provision, we shall see with what care Adam was instructed to fit him for the responsibilities and the dangers of his situation. We can conceive of no plans better suited to his condition. We will now turn to one of the most extraordinary and instructive portions of Adamic history.

One of the most interesting and remarkable measures of the divine wisdom was to open to Adam the volume of natural history, and to call his attention to the valuable instruction which it offers. The account which is given of this case is comprised in the following words: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him an helpmeet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him." (Gen. ii. 18-20.)

The connection of the gift of Eve with this account is remarkable, and gives cause to believe that naming the animals preceded her creation. The possibility that this association in the narrative may have been intended to contrast the manner in which the animals were made, from the ground, with the manner of Eve's production, from the person of Adam, is, although a very suggestive fact in regard to the relations of the sexes, still not equal to the probability that the narrative states an actual order of events; and that, as Adam lived some time without his companion, this interval was spent in naming the animals. Nor could the time required for such an effort have been very brief; and

it is equally evident that the exertions of thought to accomplish this effort must have been great. It is said in the narrative that "Adam gave names to *all* cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to *every* beast of the field." The lesson in natural history, therefore, was admirably adapted to sharpen the intelligence of Adam, and to prepare him for the fatal gift which he received.

In this singular narrative, indeed, we may detect several designs too important to be omitted. It is not improbable that we may discover the origin of a regular language. The fact that God engaged in oral discourse with Adam renders it certain that this important instrument of the human mind must at least have been improved by this intercourse. If it is recollected, however, that the Creator did from the first hold oral communication with Adam, it seems to be more than a possibility that speech itself was learned in this manner. Adam must have conversed with his Maker before communicating with any human being, since he lived without any human companion for a period of some extent. Speech, then, may have been acquired or learned from divine instruction. If the nature of a human being is such that some mode of communicating ideas by the voice would have been soon discovered by an untaught man, by the expedient of a shout or a recall, and by similar contrivances, still, it is altogether improbable that speech was acquired in this way; for Adam had no rational associates, and no one with whom to exert the feeblest powers of speech, until his Maker communicated with him. The idea of language might have been conveyed, in a rudimentary way, by the lower animals, who know how to influence each other by sounds; but we have no evidence that the first idea of speech was conveyed in this manner, much less that language was acquired by a conception

derived in this way. God conversed with Adam; this is the first part of the history of human language.

The doctrine of some naturalists, that the diversities of speech may be accounted for upon the same principle as the different notes which distinguish the families and species of birds, is not demanded by any facts, but is opposed by many, or by all that we know in relation to mankind. Man is distinguished from all the lower animals by being remarkably destitute of instinct, and by being dependent upon instruction for a long series of years. It would be remarkable if so great a character as speech should have been conferred almost alone. Such a fact would never be suggested by the use of it at present, but the contrary. It is fatal to such an hypothesis, that the instinct is capable of being so easily lost, as when a new language is learned to the total disuse of any other. This occurs in every branch of the Indo-Germanic tongues; and those speaking any language whatever may learn to speak any other, and forget their own. And it is still more fatal, that in those few instances in which persons have not been taught any language, they have had no regular speech. We will not dispute that Adam may have been assisted in some measure, in his first use of language, by an inspiration similar to that which gave the apostles and primitive Christians the gift of tongues; but the supposition is needless, and the case is scarcely conceivable, when he wanted ideas as well as words.*

* An interesting example of a youth of Terra del Fuego forgetting his native language, although not long absent from his native country, is related by Mr. Darwin. "It was pitiable," observes the narrator, "to hear him address his brother or sister in English, and then express his surprise that he was not comprehended in Spanish." "Perhaps," he continues, "there is not another example of a human being who could be said to be so nearly destitute of any language." Yet, Dr. Livingstone,

If Adam was instructed in the acquisition of a regular language, as seems therefore to be evident, the extreme solicitude of the Creator to furnish him with every provision necessary for a being placed in so critical and elevated a position is apparent. The vile dogma that ignorance is the mother of devotion did not emanate from God. The first effort of the Creator was to call into use the highest powers of our intellectual nature. And we read now the exhortation to be children in malice, but in understanding to be men.

It must awaken our admiration, that the Creator, in directing the mind of the first man, led him to something like scientific classifications and distinctions. In naming the animals, Adam must necessarily have been exercised in mental discriminations. It would have been easy to have filled the first language with beautiful and imaginative associations, which so strikingly characterize the Indian languages of this continent. But the understanding, and not the fancy, was manifestly the first power addressed by the Creator; and reason, so to speak, the least distinguishing character of mankind, was attempted to be impressed on human speech.

There was a wide range of instruction opened to Adam in first directing his attention to the book of natural history. It afforded a signal display of the power of the Creator, and in a manner impressive to the feeblest capacity. If it is a true conjecture that the narrative of the creation was derived from a paradisiacal tradition, this display must have been made upon a great scale; since the

the African traveller, is said to have had great difficulty in speaking a sentence of English, when taken on board Her Majesty's ship the *Frolic*, having been so long in the disuse of the language while crossing the continent of Africa.

particulars of the creation of animals must have been given by the divine instructor. The implied parts of the Mosaic accounts of the creation are richer, therefore, than the narrative itself.

But Adam was presented with a diversified scene, highly adapted to react as instruction upon human nature itself. The lower animals offer some singular resemblances to man, as well as some striking oppositions to him. They are living beings, shadowing his reason and possessing his senses, without having his responsible nature. The varieties and singular aptitudes of their natures were thoroughly adapted to awaken curiosity; and from no study could Adam have risen with greater self-respect or knowledge of himself. However any of them may have surpassed him in strength or in fleetness or by power of flight, and as much and more as any of them were superior to one another, he was in many respects superior to them individually and to all combined. They did not possess his reason, with all their remarkable endowments. They were his servants for various uses, and acknowledged his superiority by the awe, as it might be called, which they felt for his unattired bodily form and superior intelligence.*

* Thieves in Great Britain are said, in robbing orchards, to take advantage of the awe with which animals are inspired by the naked human form. Yet this awe may be diminished and lost, as regards, at least, the lion, which fearlessly seizes and carries off a trembling Bushman to devour him.

An apprehension of danger from man is, however, somewhat different from the awe which is impressed upon the lower animals by the intelligence and form of man. This fear is acquired. Recent as well as earlier navigators have found that animals upon uninhabited islands, who have yet to learn the destructive propensities of mankind, are perfectly free from both fear and shyness. Mr. Darwin found the birds of every description in the Gallipagos — thrushes, finches, wrens, doves, carrion buzzards, and hawks — so tame that they could be approached and killed

We may also notice the valuable practical suggestions which the animate creation was capable of affording. They could teach the observer of their curious instincts,—to build, even to sew, to confine the waters of a stream, and to provide with a sagacious forethought for the future. They could teach him also that their labors were sometimes intended for the supply of his wants. The first swarm, which collected and abandoned its treasures in some receptacle within his reach, might have taught him that the bee was intended to collect an over-abundance of the vegetable ambrosia for man.

But a far greater benevolence, in opening the book of natural history to Adam, may be discerned in the moral instructions which it conveys. The supposition is incredible that the whole animal world has changed its nature since the fall. No scriptural necessity requires such a supposition; and geology very plainly shows that the same destructive propensities, and death itself, existed before the fall, as well as now. The Bible requires that the death of *mankind* should be referred to the fall, and nothing more. Besides, it is an assumption ill-supported by the scriptural account of the creation and of the fall of man, that Adam was made absolutely immortal. “The tree of life” seems, both from the original account and from the allusions to it in the prophets as a *healing* tree, to have been intended to preserve the life and health of the first man, so long as it continued to exist.* “And the Lord God said, Behold, the

with a switch, and even with a cap or hat, as he found by experiment. Time, therefore, is required to impress the fear of man upon the animal creation. In the Falkland Islands the birds were tame at the time of the visit of the ship *Beagle*, while upon the opposite coast of Terra del Fuego geese were found as difficult to kill as they generally are.

* Rev. xxii. 2 ; Ezek. xlvii. 12 ; Prov. iii. 18.

man has become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and *live forever*, therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. iii. 22-24.) How much more impressive, also, was the penalty of death, if Adam had witnessed this terrible event in the animal creation; and how unimpressive if he had never beheld it! *

Since, then, we cannot doubt that the animal races were precisely the same originally as they are now, we may readily perceive the value of the moral instruction which was conveyed to the first moral beings by them. Men have in every age derived moral lessons from the brutal races. They have denoted each other by some appellation derived from this instructive source, as possessing some

* Much controversy has been had upon the nature of the death threatened to Adam. From the fact that he did not immediately die, it has been supposed that the loss of his happiness was principally intended. But a different explanation may be given of the subject. The words of the original have been rendered in our version, "For in the day thou eatest thereof, *thou shalt surely die*." The original, however, is more correctly given in the margin of our Bibles, — "dying thou shalt die." There is no good reason why the meaning should not be taken to be "thou shalt die dying," — "thou shalt begin to die, and finally die." The consistency of the threatening is therefore preserved. Adam began immediately to die.

It will be conceived, however, that his soul did not perish, and that his annihilation was not involved in the original threatening. This may be. But still, it would not follow that the soul was naturally deathless, since it might have perished afterwards. It is not material, however, to any scriptural doctrine, perhaps, whether the soul is regarded as naturally deathless, or whether its destruction requires an act of divine power

quality like that of an animal; as the majesty of the lion, or the rapacity or the meanness of some other animal. Our Indian tribes are well known to be very fond of denoting each other by the names of animals. In fact, there is no human character, no virtue or vice, which is not strikingly mirrored among the animal tribes. Skill, fortitude, cunning, cowardice, affection, innocence, rage, and everything else, is represented in this singular representative moral scale. It would be very remarkable if the Creator had formed the lower animals with these various dispositions, without intending to convey by them some valuable moral lessons. Many persons have derived some of their most important and earliest moral impressions from the hymns of Dr. Watts, in which the representative virtues and vices of the brutal world have been turned to such admirable account. The little hymn commencing, "Let dogs delight," &c., is worth more than many whole volumes of ethics in its practical effects upon the mind.

Adam, therefore, took some of his most important moral lessons from the natural history which the benevolence of the Creator set before him. The want of experience, which it may be believed that we are convinced he really had, was attempted to be supplied in the most effectual manner of which we are able to conceive. A picture of the guilt and misery which would ensue, if he should enter into the dark world of transgression or of unrestrained passion, was set before him. It is quite possible that he did not comprehend the full measure of this valuable instruction, and most likely he did not; but the moral law, with the consequences of its observance and disregard, was spread in living pictures before his mind. This must be allowed to have been an admirable preparative for his encounters with temptation. Cunning and surprised inno-

cence must have been among the familiar spectacles presented to his eye ; since the efforts of a ravenous beast or bird—at least, those of the cat, or of that unfailing companion of man, the dog — must have been observed. Sentiments of horror and pity were, therefore, produced in his mind. Subsequently, no doubt, he acquired by the fall an experimental acquaintance with good and evil which sharpened his sagacity to distinguish these lessons of the brutal creation.

We turn now to much the most interesting part of our subject. How long Adam lived without his companion, we possess no means for exactly determining. She was made last ; and for this dangerous gift, as it proved to be, he was, as we have seen, admirably prepared.

Society, in fact, constitutes the great trial of man, and the trial must have come sooner or later. The angels were made unsexual, and appear to have fallen from pride, which is called “ the condemnation of the devil.” But, if the appointment of the domestic state subjects man to any hazards on its own account, it is, nevertheless, admirably adapted to promote a virtuous condition. A society of men without woman, in the limited extent to which it can ever occur, is always a barbarism. The domestic state repays for the liberty which it takes away, by producing a deeper current of the gentler and disinterested affections. It destroys the individualism of man, and puts him in those relations in which he forms a part of a dual and compound being. It is obviously, therefore, a condition well adapted to inexperienced beings. The sentiments of justice are most forcibly called into being by the domestic state. Alone, or associated with beings like himself, man could defend himself with the strength of his arm ; and his feeling of independence and his strong passions would frequently

lead to this barbarous mode of justice, as well as give birth to the pride and ambition through which angels fell. But with a weaker companion, and with still feebler offspring, he keenly feels the need of principles and of institutions of justice to spread their protection over the objects of his affection, when his own arm is distant from them. He learns to take interest, therefore, as strong as his love of happiness, in the order of society, and in the moral relations of his fellow-men. The domestic relation, therefore, makes him a member of the world, and is the root of the unity of the race, as it is the parent of many valuable institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the elevation of woman has borne so large a part in the history of modern civilization. Our great progenitor learned, it may be further observed, from this relation, the affections which he owed to his Maker.

But we must change the view of this interesting picture. For it was here, amid the elements of his greatest strength, that the adversary found the means of subduing the primitive man. The case shows, however, the value of the divine instructions, since the adversary did not deceive the understanding of Adam. His convictions were too strong to be overcome. But he armed the present in a way which Adam wanted the power to resist. We are left from the narrative with no other conclusion than that the thought of losing his companion was the sole occasion of his fall. He fell then, as he might have fallen with less reproach to his courage and with less loss of dignity, and as in fact men fall every day; inasmuch as they surrender a high and often laudable purpose, by those affections in which the innocent love of woman is capable of ensnaring them. It would appear to be impossible for the Creator to produce a blessing which does not involve a temptation. Pride, wine,

and woman, are three very formidable powers, which have abundantly recorded their effects upon the world.

It is impossible, therefore, in contemplating this history, to avoid the conviction that the weakness of Adam lay altogether in his want of experience. Experience and knowledge could alone have raised him completely above the dominion of the present. The tempter seems thoroughly to have comprehended this fact, and to have attacked him where the experience which he had would oppose the feeblest obstacle. The tempter even urged the importance of experience. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." It was quite true that experience was important; but its acquisition by actual disobedience did not constitute any part of the superior condition to which it was desirable to attain.

We can account, therefore, for the unconscious guile with which Eve fell into the snare. Her curiosity was awake to understand more the mysteries of her existence; and the attempt to persuade her husband shows that she probably fell a sacrifice to the strength of her affections for him. A deep sympathy for his deceived wife, and a terror in contemplating his own desolation without her, must have been the effective causes which determined Adam also to yield to the persuasions of his companion. Unlike Abraham, who at the command of God prepared to offer up his son, under the persuasion that he who commanded was capable of raising him from the dead, he could not resign the only fellow who had cheered and graced his solitude.

Nor can we fail to see evidence in this interesting patriarchal fact that the power of temptation is less in the present condition of mankind than it was in a state of innocence. An enemy, who said "Eat and ye shall be as gods," caused

Eve to sin ; and the love of his wife drew the fall of Adam. But a command, apparently unreasonable, and which when obeyed would inflict a great and horrible calamity, could not seduce Abraham. God, so to speak, could not by a dreadful test shake the faith of that patriarch. An apostle tells us that Abraham comprehended that the divine command was of the nature of a test.* The salutary uses of evil, and the value of experience, are clearly proved by this case.

For it must be obvious that if Adam had possessed the experience of Abraham, and had his understanding been filled with equal conceptions of the future, the fall would not have happened. He whose understanding was not deceived would not have fallen through the love of the present, if his mind had been able, without any bias to evil, to balance the interests of the present and of the future. As it was, the choice fell upon the side of the present. But admonitions of danger are weak to an inexperienced being ; and the guilt of Adam, notwithstanding the long train of consequences with which it has been attended, was not equal to that of many of his descendants, who have sinned amid greater knowledge. The tree of evil rung upon the comparatively void intelligence of Adam a note of alarm ; but it was not that note which falls upon our ears from the Bible, from personal experience and history, clear and intelligible. It was like the cry of fire and the wailing of bells to one who knows not the nature of fire nor what it is to be burned. Experience with the uncultivated races of men has shown that moral impressions upon untaught minds are feeble, and liable to be soon forgotten.

* Heb. xi. 17-19. — In the first stage of mankind the serpent may be taken as a symbol of the moral condition of the world, for it fell before its art, but in a later stage God appears upon the scene to test a pious and representative man, and the test was sustained.

An interesting example, detailed in a work on natural history, and bearing upon the present point, and upon several subjects introduced in this chapter, is too important to omit, and may be related without comment. The case is related in the "History of the Earth and Animated Nature," vol. I., p. 225, 226,* and was taken from the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences. "A young man of the town of Chartres, between the age of twenty-three and twenty-four, the son of a tradesman, and deaf and dumb from his birth, began to speak, all of a sudden, to the great astonishment of the whole town. He gave them to understand that, about three or four months before, he had heard the sound of the bells for the first time, and was greatly surprised at this new and unknown sensation. After some time, a kind of water issued from his left ear, and he then heard perfectly well with both. During these three months, he was sedulously employed in listening, without saying a word, and accustoming himself to speak softly (so as not to be heard) the words pronounced by others. He labored hard also in perfecting himself in the pronunciation and in the ideas attached to every sound. At length, having supposed himself qualified to break silence, he declared that he could now speak, although as yet but imperfectly. Soon after, some able divines questioned him concerning his ideas of his past state, and principally with respect to God, his soul, the morality or the turpitude of actions. The young man, however, had not driven his solitary speculations into that channel. He had gone to mass indeed with his parents; had learned to sign himself with the cross, to kneel down and assume all the grimaces of a man that was praying: but he did this without any manner of knowledge of the intention or the cause. He saw others do the like,

* Goldsmith's.

and that was enough for him. He knew nothing even of death, and it never entered into his head. He led a life of pure animal instinct. Entirely taken up with sensible objects, and such as were present, he did not seem to make as many reflections upon these as might reasonably be expected from his improving situation. And yet the young man was not in want of understanding; but the understanding of a man deprived of all commerce with others is so very confined that the mind is in some measure totally under the control of its immediate sensations."

In conclusion, it may be observed that much light is cast upon several subjects by the interesting history to which we have attended.

Natural evil was contemporaneous with the origin of nature, and was an arrangement of God. Moral evil, if we mean by it a want of absolute moral perfection, judged of by an absolute standard, existed before the fall, since the commerce of near relations (according to the common belief in the derivation of mankind from a single pair) was allowed and required; and the paradisiacal condition in other respects also fell below a perfect standard. But moral evil, as a wilful departure from known duty, sprung from the voluntary action of an accountable being, and was a product of the will, and was occasioned by the weakness of the creature, as devoid of personal experience and deficient in examples. The fault of our first parents was probably hastened, for wise reasons, by the particular arrangement of God.

It is quite evident, from this history, that great hazards inseparably attended the moral developments of the first rational beings. They could not have been made rational and moral, and been left to the free action of their powers, without such hazards. It cannot be probable, therefore,

that this perilous condition was extensively admitted in the universe, nor that it is so admitted at present. For, if the condition of beings commencing their existence alone was not secure here, nor among angels, it is a just inference that it would not be secure anywhere, and also that a benevolent and wise Creator would not have diffused dangers of this character throughout the creation.

It is not an improbable supposition, therefore, that the design of populating the universe depends in some way upon the measures employed for the government of this world. It is certainly very clearly affirmed in the Scriptures that the world is the scene of events through which, in some way, the whole material creation will be overspread with a happy and virtuous population.

It is not, therefore, altogether an illusion of the eye, that the world has a central place in the creation. The appearance is the reality. Nor is it difficult in a general manner to understand how the world will exert a moral influence corresponding with such a character. Here all possible developments of moral character and relations are and have long been going on. All virtues are produced and all vices acted upon this stage. All associations of events which can affect the character of a moral being, or furnish him with salutary instruction, seem here to be displayed. Religion itself, the great expression of the moral powers of man, is turned in every possible shape of utility and mischief. The experience of the creation, which was so limited at the birth of man, is certainly multiplying itself to a very ample extent, and will, it may be presumed, before many more centuries have passed away, have attained an amount quite sufficient to fill all the principal necessities of the case.

But this experience is not collecting without great cost; and in view of it, there is no other principle by which it

can be explained than that this world is to be used as a measure for the government of all others. There is none other apparent by which the case can be reconciled with the divine benevolence and wisdom. So much we *know* — that the universe is in its infancy; that astronomy cannot point out the fitness of any other world to be inhabited besides the present; and that the Saviour will ultimately, from a throne reared from the events of this world, extend an effectual power over all worlds in the creation. We shall have occasion to return to these ideas, with much greater advantages, when we have taken a more enlarged and satisfactory view of other facts within our reach respecting the extent and the designs of the creation.

We will conclude this portion of the work with another chapter, upon the probable duration of the present system of evil in the world. •

CHAPTER XI.

DURATION OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF EVIL, OR OF THE PROBATIONARY SYSTEM.

What we need still further to know.—The Means at Hand.—The Natural Preconception that the Universe will be generally Peopled by New Acts of Creation.—The Conception highly Objectionable.—Opposed by Prudential as well as Theological Considerations.—Contrary to the Actual Course of the Divine Proceedings.—The Conjecture entirely removed by a few Facts.—The Duration of the World, and of the Probationary State of Man on Earth.—Relations of the Subject with the Resurrection.—A Proximate Result.—The Restoration to an actual Bodily Condition unassailable.—Fluctuation of Opinion in regard to the Duration of the World.—Early Christians, and Modern Opinions.—What happened instead of the expected Second Coming of Christ.—The Horrors of that Expectation not Imperfectly Realized.—Modern Opinions in a Jewish Dress.—Melville and British Adventists.—Duration of the Millennium.—Barnes and Fuller.—The Dominion of Christ on Earth represented as Perpetual.—Several Important Confirmations.—Particular and Remarkable Declarations of the Scriptures.—A Glimpse distinguished of the Manner in which the Worlds will be Populated.—Inference in regard to the Heavenly State.—MANY WORLDS TO BE POPULATED FROM THE PRESENT.

WE have attained to the facts thus far in the progress of our inquiry, namely, — That the universe is in its infancy, and that the propitiatory work of Christ, as it affects the church, was to be used as a principal measure for the government of the creation; and we have seen it to be

probable that this measure, depending as it does for its perfection, as a measure of government, upon its development in the church, is still in a state of incompleteness. This high probability seems to be confirmed as a fact by Paul, who frequently speaks of himself or of the church as having fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and as filling up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ, or something to this effect. And the apostle treats this subject as one of great dignity.*

Still, these conclusions, however valuable, bring us only to the threshold of our inquiry, where it is impossible that we should pause, with any degree of satisfaction. We are left in ignorance upon several points. We do not know in what manner or by what beings the vacant places of the creation will be filled; nor how, except by conjecture, the influence of the work of Christ on earth is to act upon them.

Upon these points conjecture is of little avail, and might mislead us into very false conclusions. It is likely, however, to be the preconception of many that we are left entirely, from the nature of the case, to this feeble resort. But it will be found that the Scriptures throw great and convincing light upon these subjects.

Upon one of these points, indeed,—the populating of the universe,—it will be naturally conceived, by those who do not easily lay aside the prepossessions of their education, that we have more than conjecture, and that we may affirm as a very high probability, or as a fact, that *new* races of beings—varied in their organization to fit them for dissimilar positions in the universe—must be created to fill the vast spaces of the creation. It may be thought incon-

* The following passages may be consulted : Col. i. 24-27 ; Phil. iii. 10 ; 2 Tim. i. 8, 9 ; ii. 10-12 ; 2 Cor. i. 5, 6 ; Eph. i. 22, 23.

ceivable that *mankind* should be diffused over the entire creation; since we seem to be assured, and, if for no other reason, because we are assured, that the multiplication of moral beings by generation is an expedient belonging to this world and not to angels, and probably not to any other beings; * and the short period assigned to the existence of mankind in this world, so soon to terminate in a general catastrophe, seems to bar the belief that the human race can ever become numerous enough to occupy the entire creation. And as to angels, they are spiritual beings, or are supposed to be so, having not, as we know, or have any reason to suppose, any material or bodily organization whatever. And it may be further observed, and even more to the point, that the office of angels is particularly defined in the Scriptures, and is declared to be one wholly relating to this world. The remarkable declaration upon this subject is, "Are they not *all* ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) This is conclusive indeed as to the question whether angels, at least during the continuance of mankind in the world, constitute any portion of the inhabitants of the other material worlds. And when mankind should cease to live or to multiply upon this planet, if these spiritual beings are no more numerous than is sufficient for offices in this world, their numbers could not be adequate, even if they should become embodied for the purpose, for the supply of the creation. These reasons would probably be conclusive with some for conceiving that new acts of divine power must supply the creation for the most part with inhabitants. But no one could be more mistaken than in such a conception.

* "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven." — Mark xii. 25.

There are some objections to this hypothesis of a speculative nature, proceeding from former observations in this work. Aside from the fact, which we believe we shall soon be able to establish, that the plan which this expedient involves would not be the simplest, nor the best which can be conceived, it is obvious that newly-created beings, beginning their existence anywhere, must be destitute of experience, and multitudes created together would, by increasing their relations, augment the hazards of a moral existence to a fearful extent; and however rich the universe might be in examples and experience, still this knowledge would need to be communicated, and when it was done, as was essentially done in Eden, it would not be certain that the decisions of the will would follow the instruction. The understanding is the source of the light of the will, so to speak, but not the only power which controls its acts; this power also and much more effectually resides in the affections or in the emotions. The only possible mode of regulating this powerful and complex source of moral action in an accountable being is, *culture* by experience. But it is obvious that such a culture could never be effectually carried on, without appointing experienced beings as instructors. This would be to install one class of beings over another, and would be hazardous, though in different ways, to both; and was a mode, although practicable, which divine wisdom, it is plain, did not see fit to employ for the good of man. In whatever way angels fulfil the offices of ministering spirits, they do it in an invisible manner, and we are seldom, if ever, sensible of their kind exertions. What they do is even a problem unsolved, perhaps inscrutable.

But the purpose of this work is to build its conclusions upon a basis surer than speculation, or than induction too

far removed from the facts which are judged to support it; and facts are quite accessible, and fully adequate for the purpose of overthrowing the hypothesis noticed. Still, quite irrespective of these facts, it must be admitted that the conception that the universe is to be peopled by new acts of creation falls from its place, as an indisputable judgment, to a very doubtful and awkward conjecture.

The facts to be considered stand intimately related with the question of the duration of the world; or how long the human race are to follow each other in successive generations upon earth; or, what is the same thing, how long the system of probation is to continue in the world. Upon these subjects the Scriptures will be surprisingly found to offer very abundant testimony.

The relation of this question with the subject of the resurrection demands a moment's attention. If we admit the resurrection of the body, it must be received as a very rational conclusion that men must, upon receiving their new bodies, exist in a material world. The question, therefore, becomes one of great interest, how long mankind will continue to multiply upon this earth, and how extensively, therefore, we may expect that the creation will be inhabited by them. A great portion of the interest of this work will be found to depend upon this question; and, although the answer will unavoidably be proximate or partial at present, it will be far otherwise when we reach the result.

As to the resurrection, there has been no successful effort to overthrow the doctrine of a real bodily renovation of mankind, to occur in some manner and at some time. The celebrated argument in the fifteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians shows that the doctrine is unassailable upon scriptural grounds. The most formidable effort ever made to shake this doctrine, coupled with much critical skill, and

strongly insisting upon the expression "spiritual body," has, by almost universal admission, signally failed.* The objection of the *impossibility* of the material renovation of all mankind would be well urged, and irresistibly so, if the Scriptures asserted that the new body was to be composed of its former matter. But this is not affirmed, nor some other things in regard to this interesting subject, which will be subsequently considered. In short, it is expressly said that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." †

As regards the duration of the world and of its present state of probation, there has been so great a fluctuation of opinion, as to make it evident that the Scriptures cannot have been well understood upon this subject. The time of the world's termination has been many times set, both definitely and approximately; but the uninterrupted continuance of human affairs has shown the error of all these calculations.

The primitive Christians assigned the end to a period near to their own time. This opinion was soon, though reluctantly, modified by the Revelations, ascribed to John the Evangelist, and the event was postponed until after the expiration of the thousand years, or the millennium. But the first thousand years of the Christian era passed away, and several generations succeeded, without bringing the event; when, as was to have been expected, a reâction took

* "Bush on the Resurrection." The principal design of the work of Mr. Bush was to establish his views upon the resurrection. Some incidental or associated propositions in the book are much better, or may be satisfactorily sustained. The author may be allowed to express the hope that Mr. Bush will return to the denomination of which he was so great an ornament, and defend again with his critical skill those great doctrines of the Christian faith which no discoveries in the Scriptures can ever be expected to set aside.

† 1 Cor. xv. 50.

place, but, unfortunately, not sufficient to change entirely the mode of interpreting this book, whose previous explanations had all proved to be so erroneous.

In fact, so far from the lapse of more than a thousand years bringing about the dissolution of nature, or the second coming of Christ to judge the world and to raise the dead, "the Man of Sin," who was to be destroyed by the brightness of the Saviour's coming, was only more established than ever. Through the influence of the Crusades, and the extraordinary enthusiasm which produced and sustained them, the world seemed quietly, with the exception of a few noble spirits, to fall into the hands of the apostasy. An extraordinary splendor was connected with this false religion by the noble architecture to which its wealth and zeal were devoted. Instead of Paradise, however, whose typical river the Crusaders sought in Egypt, the expectation of the world realized the full maturity of the Papacy; instead of Christ, a very extraordinary person indeed, under the name of Gregory VII., and justly called the Napoleon of the Church; instead of the terrible throne of judgment, the inquisition was instituted, as a horrible species of imitation of the judgment, and fire was vigorously used as an instrument of punishment; and in place of the emancipation of the faithful, feudalism, or what remained of it, inflicted its greatest injuries, and a season of universal misery and anarchy ensued, to which the providence of God added pestilences of a terrific character, which together wasted the fairest parts of Christendom, and resembled more the letting loose of Satan, predicted in the Revelations, than the coming of Christ, unless for judgment, or than any period before or since in modern times.*

* See Froissart's *Chronicles*, Hallam's *Middle Ages*, and Michelet's *History of France*, and the accounts of Lajacquerie.

Disappointed in the expectation of the end of the world, and of the general judgment, the church and the world seemed to be bent upon imitating their horrors ; and most terribly did they enact them. The wicked, or those called such, who dissented from the iron faith of Rome, now made more iron, were thrown into dungeons, in imitation of the abysses of hell, or cast into the fire ; and the saints, or those whose weak and dreamy minds could receive and digest, unaltered, the mystical faith of the church, were raised to the seventh heaven of Popish canonization.

In this way were some of the most serious doctrines of Christianity misunderstood and perverted ; and in this manner also was cruelty generated by those truths which were intended to inspire pity and a hatred of sin. Christ was dethroned, and his followers were driven into mountain valleys and concealed in monasteries, or buried in dungeons, by the process in which the false Christ was raised to such universal and demoniacal power in the world. Infidelity has reaped a harvest from the zeal of false Christians ; and Satan has quietly seated himself and been adored in the church, amid the greatest triumphs over his supposed expulsion.*

More modern attempts to comprehend the obscure prophecies supposed to relate to the end of the world have been scarcely more successful. Wickliffe and Luther both ventured to predict this event as distant, at most, only two or three centuries from their time. The time was believed to be at hand by Beza when a blazing star made its appear-

* The declaration of Archbishop Tillotson before the House of Commons (Macaulay's History), " That Pagans, who had never heard the name of Christ, were better members of society than those who had been found in the school of the Papacy," although an exaggerated statement, as applying to the whole body of believers in the Roman church, must be admitted to contain a great measure of truth.

ance in the north, in the constellation Cassiopea; but the portent, like all others, passed away, after continuing for more than a year, without bringing the event.

Still more recent attempts to solve the mystery of this subject have added another thousand years to the calculation, and increased the prediction of Luther by that sum; and it has been an opinion very extensively received that instead of the end of the world, the millennium, or the world's conversion to Christian faith and practices, will take place at a time not very distant from the longest calculation of Luther. We ought, therefore, now to be living just upon the borders of the millennium, or even within the period itself. But very little does the world, with scarcely a hundred millions of Protestants, and with its hundreds of millions of Roman and Greek Christians and heathen, or the Protestant church with its defective morality, display an appearance of the dawn of such a state as is contemplated in the scriptural predictions of the conversion of the world. It would be fruitless to review the grounds upon which any of these various opinions have been founded. Several things may be observed upon the calculations in general.*

* In regard to the opinions which have had great currency in the denomination to which the author belongs, the following may be set down as the view of the case :

Beginning of the Papacy,	A. D. 606
Term of the Man of Sin,	1260 years.
Commencement of the Millennium,	A. D. 1866
Continuance of the Millennium,	1000 years.
Short subsequent period of Apostasy,	140 ?
End of the World,	A. D. 3006
Adding	4000 years.
Duration of the World,	7006 years.

A difference of about 150 years is made by making the commencement of the Papacy in A. D. 754.

The extraordinary attachment of the Christian world to traditional

In the first place, the concluding portions of the first half of the prophecies of John (chapters x. and xi.) seem to make the destruction of the beast or of the persecuting city concur, not with the commencement of the millennium or of the evangelical age, taken as a thousand years, as has been inferred from an isolated chapter (xx.) near the conclusion of the book, but with the permanent and everlasting reign of Christ, commonly supposed to be the heavenly state. In this view, the end of the world should occur at the time at present set for the coming of the millennium. This would materially change the views commonly entertained upon this subject, except by those highly respectable men, among whom are Melville, Noël and others, both in England and America, of the Advent class. This view of the case is, taken alone, a powerful support of these doctrines. It cannot be denied that some of the opinions of this class are well founded, although they have been degraded by some enthusiasts in this country; and it is certainly a remarkable fact, that some of the best men in the Christian world are divided upon so grave a question as whether the world is ever to be converted.

But, allowing the general correctness of the method by which the time of the end of the world has been sought, it does not follow that an immediate succession of events is in all cases intended by the author of the Revelations. This cannot be the case, if he comprises the whole history of the Christian world, from its commencement to the conclusion of its great struggle, in a few brief general summaries. The millennium might be the next great event after the destruc-

opinions, for which there is no evidence to support their truth whatever, may be seen in the desire felt to conform these reckonings to the Jewish belief that the world in its present state will continue for a cosmical week, counting each day a thousand years, and conclude at that period.

tion of antichrist, and to follow it, if it really does so, by the space of several generations, or even of centuries; and the duration of the apostasy which was to succeed the millennium is unknown. The *day* of judgment, too, may be extended through a considerable time, as the expression will allow, and as the case seems to demand; since comprehending in one day all the events belonging to a particular and general judgment is an obvious impossibility.

Still further, — it was a suggestion of Dr. Doddridge and of Andrew Fuller, which has been more recently advocated by Mr. Barnes,* that the thousand years of the millennium may be explained upon the same rule as the other numbers of the prophecy, as denoting, after the notation of Daniel, a day as a year. In this case, the millennium will embrace the immense period of three hundred and sixty thousand years, instead of being restricted to a thousand only.

It cannot be questioned that the dominion of the Saviour upon the earth, in whatever sense his reigning is to be taken, is represented in the prophecies of the Old Testament as being of very long, and indeed of indefinite duration. Words of the greatest stretch of meaning, as “forever,” “as the days of heaven,” “everlasting,” and the like, are used to denote its continuance.† The Jews in the time of our Saviour took these prophecies in their natural and consistent import, as is clear from a casual remark recorded by John. “The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou that the Son of man must be lifted up?”‡

It must be obvious that a long and indefinite continuance

* Barnes' Notes on the Revelations.

† Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29; Is. lv. 3; Dan. vii. 14, 27.

‡ xii. 34. Compare Luke i. 32, 33.

of a virtuous condition of mankind is in agreement with the long geological preparations of the world, with the instructive and still developing lessons produced by the history of mankind, and with the hitherto meagre result of the mission of Christ among men. It is scarcely credible that the world should conclude at so short a period as that commonly assigned. Several declarations of the Scriptures, however, are much to the purpose.

The consideration of one or two passages must very materially change the common opinion, that the world, with its present probationary economy, is to be of very limited and definite duration. The statement in the decalogue, that, while sin would be punished to the third and fourth descent, the virtue of parents would be rewarded *unto thousands*, seems to require us to understand in the second term thousands of *generations*. In this case, it is obvious, the existence of families on the earth would extend immensely beyond the usual computation; since there have not been, at the most, more than two or three hundred generations upon the earth.

But the meaning of the statement is set at rest by a similar declaration in Deuteronomy, which is not liable to any misapprehension, and which has lain unnoticed during all the changes of opinion upon the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. "Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy, with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations." (Deut. vii. 9.) Now, a thousand generations are thirty thousand years; and thousands of generations are a much greater, and even an indefinite term.

We might add to these considerations the remarkable intimation of the Scriptures, as it seems to be, that the

church will be chiefly extended and perfected on the principle of the Hebrew economy, that of *family descent*. A very interesting series of proof and of illustration might be entered upon in regard to this subject; but the discussion would occupy much space, and may be dispensed with. The importance of the subject will, however, admit of one or two observations.

If the fact stated be true, the world must continue for a considerable period, in order to arrive by this means at its entire evangelization and perfection. We may readily conceive, also, how much superior *educating* the world in religious principles and practices would be to the method pursued now, for eighteen hundred years, with so little effect, of converting men of adult years and of too firmly established habits, or of neglected religious culture.* A remarkable fact, altogether too important and curious to be passed by, and which may be put to the test of mathematical evidence, may be particularly mentioned. This fact is, that the membership of the church would have increased vastly more, upon the principle of natural descent, had there been sufficient virtue and intelligence to have connected with it a system of domestic culture. For example, had the church numbered only five hundred persons at the death of the apostles,—although its real membership was far greater,—the increase up to the present time would not only have equalled, but several times exceeded, the present population of the globe. In fact, a descent from *one pious family*, which had preserved its fidelity through successive generations, would have given a much more numerous membership

* The following passages may be consulted upon this subject: Deut. ix. 14; Ps. xxv. 13; Job xxxviii. 13; Ps. xxxvii. 18, 20, 28, 29. To which should be added those very numerous passages which so earnestly enjoin the instruction of the young in the principles of religion.

than now exists. So much higher does the practice of virtue rank in the wisdom of God than the utmost nicety in maintaining the forms, or in cementing, by philosophy, the doctrinal frame-work of religion. "Arise, get thee down quickly from hence," the Lord said to Moses; "for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of *thee* a nation mightier and greater than they."

It must be admitted, then, that the world will continue for a long and altogether for an indefinite time, since its duration is not determined in the Scriptures. Its duration is denoted by language which, as we have seen, would warrant the extension of its period much beyond the three hundred and sixty thousand years to which it is thought that the millennium may reach. In short, the sun must cease to act as the centre and luminary of the solar system before the transmission of blessings through a regular inheritance will cease upon the earth. "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." (Ps. lxxxix. 35-37.)

We have, therefore, attained the discovery of one means by which many worlds will be peopled. It will be from this world; and the greatest influences of the mission of Christ can, unembarrassed of every difficulty, be extended to them all. The removal of successive generations, throughout a long age of universal righteousness, would be sufficient to populate many worlds.

If we have, then, in this manner a glimpse of at least a part of the divine purpose, as regards the regions beyond

our globe, we must be impressed with singular feelings of surprise and delight. We perceive, at once, one reason for the importance which is assigned to this portion of the creation in the Scriptures. Still, the declarations of the Scriptures obtain only their partial fulfilment by this explanation.

It may be further observed, also, that the subject incidentally removes much of the obscurity which rests upon the heavenly state. Many minds have struggled in vain to obtain a clear and satisfactory view of this condition. But we may undoubtedly contemplate it as designed to be a material state. The Saviour has a material body; and there is reason to believe that several, at least, of the saints, have obtained their complete bodily renovation. This is most probably true of Enoch and Elijah, who never died, nor left any bodies to be raised; if it is not also true of Moses, who, together with Elijah, appeared with Christ in a bodily form at the transfiguration. But we are also told that *many* of the saints which slept arose at the time of the crucifixion, and, after the Saviour's resurrection, went into the Holy City and appeared unto many.* The implication from this narrative is that they did not mingle again in the common affairs of the world, like Lazarus, to die again; and it is more probable that they ascended with Christ to heaven than that they returned to the grave and to a disembodied state. Paul, when expressing his earnest desire to depart and to be with Christ, seems to imply that the saints would not in any case be restricted to a pure spiritual or disembodied state, but that they would be clothed with some bodily form.† Of this import are the

* Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

† If the memory of the author serves him aright, the author's valuable friend, the venerable Dr. Samuel Fisher, of New Jersey, the first Mod-

expressions, "a building of God," "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and "desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (2 Cor. v.) At least a part of the saints are clothed with their proper material bodies; their resurrection has been fully attained, and they are doubtless already enjoying those blessings of a material existence which are designed for all believers. They are in that comprehensive part of the creation called heaven, awaiting the multitudes who must join them from this earth.

We shall follow out all these conclusions, however, with more firm and more extensive scriptural evidence, in the succeeding portions of this examination. But at present, we cannot doubt, we stand upon a solid conclusion as to one fact, that many worlds are to be populated from this!

One or two things interrupt, however, the agreeableness of these contemplations. If we conceive that the world is to continue through a very long and indefinite period, our familiar conceptions of the resurrection and of the general judgment seem to put themselves in the way of the full surrender of the mind to this interesting contemplation. But these interesting subjects can only offer a difficulty of reconciliation; there can be no real opposition in the facts of Scripture. Our further attention to the subject may confidently promise a complete solution of the difficulty.

We will now attend to those facts which will present all the points of this discussion in the light of THE CLEAREST DEMONSTRATION.

erator of the New School General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, entertained this opinion, or at least did not deem it to be improbable.

PLAN OF THE CREATION.

PART IV.

THE DIRECT ARGUMENT AND THE RESULT.

CHAPTER XII.

WERE THE APOSTLES DECEIVED?

The Principal and more Demonstrative Part of this Inquiry respecting the Plan of the Creation, now undertaken. — The Interest which attaches to the Subjects. — Another Sceptical Objection, much more formidable in its Evidence. — Proper Mode of treating such a Difficulty. — How the Case stands related with the Credibility of the New Testament. — Revelation impregnable in its General Evidence. — Yet some existing Opinions and Facts not reconcilable with one another. — Some Firmness of Mind, and a Resolute Determination to adhere to the Facts of Revelation, whatever Opinions may oppose them, necessary in approaching this Subject. — The Worth of Tradition and of Human Authority in Religion. — Gibbon. — The Treatment which the Subject has received from Christian Writers. — Grotius. — Jerome. — Dr. Watts. — Warburton. — Bishop Newton. — Bishop Watson. — Importance attaching to the True Date of the Apocalypse. — Examination of the Teachings of the Apostles. — The Question submitted to Fact. — A Particular Explanation of the Adventists. — Justin Martyr and Papias. — True Period to which the Revelations must be assigned. — Character of the Apocalyptic Allegory. — Remarkable Prophecy of the Saviour respecting John. — Justification of Mr. Gibbon's Averment respecting the Second Coming of Christ. — The great Importance of attaining the True Explanation of the Subject. — Resemblance between the New Testament and the Old as regards their Prophecies. — Particular Confessions of the Apostles respecting their Knowledge of the Subject of the Second Coming. — Prideaux, Lightfoot, and Owen. — Conclusion. — Greater Likelihood that we have been Mistaken than that the Apostles were.

IN undertaking the final and principal part of this inquiry, we shall discover that a difficulty, sometimes scept-

tically urged, stands in the same relation to it as the astronomical objection stood in the first instance, only it may be more formidably urged, as the result of attending to it will be proportionally great.

The same care will not be taken immediately to inform the reader, step by step, of the bearings of the case upon the principal designs of this inquiry. The relations of the subject will be sufficiently distinguished from its connection with the subjects of the last chapter. It is sufficient to observe, that the consideration of the present subject, in the extent to which it will reach, will furnish us with all the elements which we shall further need to determine the great problem of the Plan of the Creation, which we have undertaken to solve. We shall meet with subjects of great intrinsic interest, which will independently deserve all the attention which they will receive.

It is always well, and quite as necessary, in contemplating a difficulty, to look at it in all its points, and in the strongest front which it presents; since, while an important truth might be won, some neglected point of attention might mar or practically defeat the result. We should not be anxious to defend revelation, or the doctrines purporting to be deduced from it, at the expense of denying any important fact, or of refusing to consider any apparent incongruity. The truth is somewhere, and can be found, if attainable at all; and it is even better to grant an admission which cannot be refused, if the means of its solution are not apparent.

The difficulty referred to has been noticed alike by Christians of the greatest eminence and by sceptics; and although it has attained less popular notoriety than some others, from its complexity and from its opposition to some of the strongest traditions of the church, still the difficulty

affects one of the strongest bulwarks of revelation. The consistency of the prophecies is affected by it; and if the solution or reconciliation is entirely impracticable, it must forever destroy the character of the New Testament, at least in the case to which it relates, as a divine revelation. It is clear, that if statements, purporting to emanate from God, as declarations of future events, prove to be entirely unfaithful, by the failure of events to fulfil them, or by the complete opposition of actual events with the events foretold, the pretension to revelation must have been false, and the attempt to gain credit by the prophecy an imposition.

It is precisely in this condition that some current religious doctrines, which were even able to survive the Reformation, stand with facts. Revelation itself shares this condition, by being interpreted through them; and, indeed, a real difficulty exists as to the real meaning of the New Testament in the case, — presenting an actual appearance of discrepancy, irrespective of any traditional glosses, — and which is worthy of earnest attention.

Let no one, for a moment, fear that the New Testament will fall from its position as a revelation, by the most strict comparison of its real declarations with the real facts of history. We do not expect to show that the New Testament is an unfaithful prophet or witness, but shall show an irreconcilable and fatal discrepancy between facts and the opinions commonly received upon several subjects.

We have particular need to guard against a danger in considering a subject which lies at the door of the most stupendous truths of revelation. We must resign our confidence in some human opinions or authority, as a condition of knowing and of preserving the character of the New Testament for inspiration. If we fear to face opinions and to test their truth by the Scriptures alone, a fatal obstacle

is opposed to our success. But if we dispel the mists of tradition, a subject in the highest degree interesting and auxiliary to the great doctrines of Christian faith will open upon the mind.*

Human authority must be held to be of much less worth in religion than even in philosophy. In searching for philosophical truths, no man will now consent to pass through the wicket-gate of any philosophical sect, in whatever repute, or to wear its badge as the license of his search. The world is no longer in its nonage, and has cast off the swaddling-bands of its infancy. Nor does it comport with the responsibility nor with the dignity of a Christian, to search for the will of God through the license and prescriptions of human authority. Twice have the opinions of the world and the thrones of its intellectual masters been overthrown; once in philosophy, by Bacon, and once in religion, by the Reformation. We are instructed in the Scriptures to call no man master after the flesh, — one branch of Christian duty which has been poorly observed, — for “One is our master, even Christ.” We are exhorted to *prove* all things, and to hold fast that which is good; and we are further directed to be ready always to give a *reason*, to every man that asks us, for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. No man can call us to account, therefore, for implicitly obeying these counsels of God. We will direct our attention, with these observations, to the facts in the case.

Mr. Gibbon, in his “History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” makes the following observations:†

* “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” — “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” — Is. viii. 20; Jer. xxiii. 28.

† Vol. I., chap. xv.

“When the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith and of observing the precepts of the Gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers, of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire. The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion. In the primitive church, the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth, and might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of the moment when the globe itself, and all the various races of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their Divine Judge.”

This important passage has been extracted in full; and many have read it under the impression that Mr. Gibbon

was simply an infidel, like Paine, and set it down to his hatred of Christianity, and given it no further attention. But whatever historical statement might have been made by so laborious a scholar as Mr. Gibbon was worthy of respect; and however his judgment, formed on his reading of the corrupt patristical literature of the ancient church, may have been liable to be warped upon religious subjects, there is no reason to think that he would wilfully have falsified any statement, or have intentionally substituted a historical fiction for a truth.*

But, in the present case, Mr. Gibbon is no more to be charged with scepticism than some Christian writers, who have entertained the same opinion. And all his statements are capable of verification, except perhaps one, which is indeed an explanation which he gives of the subject.

It is altogether inconsistent with our reverence for the Creator, and very repugnant to our regard for revelation, to acknowledge that the apostles were deceived to the extent which seems to be implied, and that God, for wise ends, favored their error. The Saviour does not, indeed, appear to have corrected all the errors of the disciples; and his instructions bearing upon their mistakes did not perfectly enlighten them while he was with them. Nor did the Spirit subsequently completely enlighten their minds where they had been or might again be uninformed. The inspiration which was given them much exceeded their comprehension. But this is very different from allowing or causing them to *teach* a positive error. If they *taught* errors, under the

* It is a miracle that any one, not first absolutely convinced of the truth of Christianity, should rise from contemplating the Christianity displayed in ancient church history with his faith unimpaired. The church, portrayed by the fidelity and great learning of Dr. Mosheim, has been justly called by Milner the church of Satan. Certainly it has too many characters which render it worthy of such a distinction.

claim of inspiration, they were at least mistaken ; but their pretence was also false, and their whole credit must fall as inspired men.

Still, Mr. Gibbon had the support of Christian writers for his unfortunate explanation, which, if allowed, would afford to jesuitic morality the very sanction of its slippery code which it has long wanted. Hugo Grotius, and other Christian writers, have adopted or favored the same solution. But it is capable of being decided, by an appeal to the Scriptures, whether the statements of Mr. Gibbon are the mere allegations of an enemy of religion ; or whether the apostles, and the Christians of their age, did really believe that the kingdom of heaven and the end of the world were at hand. We should, however, in the first place, consider the treatment which this difficulty has received from the hands of Christian writers.

Upon the allegorizing principle of Origen and of his school, which deeply infected the system of patristical explanations, the subject could have been easily managed by the Christian teachers who soon succeeded the apostles. Still, the almost universal judgment of antiquity was, that the events predicted, as soon to happen, were more or less near, though still distant. Early Christian writers speak of antichrist, who was to precede these events — whom Jerome very justly regarded as being an adversary which should arise *in the church* (" *in ecclesia, ut verius arbitramur* ") — as being at the doors.*

More modern Christian writers have taken the language of the apostles, when they speak of the kingdom of heaven

* Evidence may be gathered upon this subject from some quotations from the Christian writers of the few first centuries in Newton's Dissertations upon the Prophecies (Dis. xxii.), and from the Historical Commentaries of Mosheim.

and refer to the end of the world, as being near, in a still greater stretch of meaning. At the present time, it is commonly conceived that the language must be taken in such a way as to mean several thousand years; and some would, according to their hypothesis, be obliged to stretch it to altogether an indefinite signification. Some, however, have been free to confess that the apostles or primitive Christians were mistaken. Dr. Watts may be added to Grotius as giving this solution. Mr. Gibbon, therefore, should no more be pronounced a sceptic for merely holding this opinion, or for stating the facts of which it is a very unfortunate explanation, than Dr. Watts; and it is obvious that the difficulty must have been very great, and the case very plain, which led such an author as Dr. Watts to admit that the apostles were deceived.*

Bishop Warburton met the same difficulty in the light of a sceptical attack upon the Scriptures. He rejected, however, the opinion of ancient and modern interpreters, that the Saviour's prophecy, respecting his coming, was of a complex character, and essentially interwoven with a prediction of his second coming to judgment. "The principle both go upon is false; and if what hath been said be duly weighed, it will appear that this prophecy doth not respect Christ's *second* coming to judgment, but his *first*, in the

* The opinion of Grotius is referred to by Gibbon, and that of Dr. Watts may be found in Bush. The following extract may be given of Dr. Watts' judgment: "As the patriarchs and the Jews of old, after the Messiah was promised, were constantly expecting his first coming almost in every generation, till he did appear, so the Christians of the first age did generally expect the second coming of Christ to judgment, and the resurrection of the dead, in that very age when it was foretold. . . . It is granted that in prophetical expressions, such as all these are, some obscurity is allowed. . . . But still these expressions had plainly such an influence on the primitive Christians, as that they imagined the day of resurrection and judgment was very near." — *World to Come*.

abolition of the Jewish policy, and the establishment of the Christian : that kingdom of Christ, which commenced on the total ceasing of the theocracy.”*

This judgment of this learned prelate must be admitted to be ingenious, and in some respects just, in distinguishing two comings after the personal advent of the Saviour in the flesh, and in some other respects. Still, it is true that the Saviour predicted his coming to judgment in the generation then living (Matt. xvi. 27, 28), and the resurrection of the dead as to occur at the same time, or in the last day or days, which the apostles conceived would be in that generation. (John vi. 39; 1 John ii. 18.)

The opinion which the Christian world appear generally to have entertained is, that the Saviour intended *both* the destruction of Jerusalem and the consummation of the world in his celebrated prophecy, but that the two events must be separated by a wide interval of time. Bishop Newton, and other Christian writers, have conceived that this prophecy refers primarily to the destruction of Jerusalem, but by implication to the other and more momentous events.†

Bishop Watson undertook a formal answer to the historical work of Mr. Gibbon, so far as it relates to Christian subjects, treating its author with much severity for his observations upon the case in hand.‡ This “Reply” has obtained much repute, among plain Christians, for the earnestness of its tone, and for the confidence of its positions. Still, the author was not fortunate in managing his case; and he has treated it too much in a polemical way to

* Warburton’s Julian, see in Newton’s Dissertations.

† Newton’s Dissertations.

‡ Letters to Edward Gibbon, Esq., &c., with an Appeal to Infidels. By R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff, &c.

be altogether fair. The "Reply" is one of those instances in which religion, and the honor of criticism, have lost something by an effort to defend them. The author sets out with the remark, that in his opinion it was improbable that the apostles either predicted the approaching end of the world or cherished such an expectation. Yet, in concluding the discussion, he appears to be compelled to qualify his confidence with the admission that the apostles might have been deceived without impairing their character as witnesses of the truth or as historians; that they followed their own understandings where they had no better light to guide them, speaking from conjecture when they could not speak from certainty.

Bishop Watson also uses, in his answer, a common but incautious mode of reasoning derived from the book of the Revelations; which may be noticed for the importance which the case will be seen to present, as well as for the dangerous facility with which the argument may be used in reasoning with sceptics. He observes,* that it is evident that St. John, who survived all the apostles, could not have had the expectation that the day of judgment and the end of the world would occur before the generation which heard the Saviour had totally expired; since the future events of the church, which were not to take place, many of them, until a long period after the death of the revelator, some of which also remain yet to be accomplished, are minutely described in the book of the Revelations.

Now, it happens that antiquity was divided as to the time when this remarkable composition was made and published; some referring it to the reign of Domitian, and others assigning it to the time of Nero, or to a time so early that it was promulged *before* the destruction of Jerusalem. It

* Letter II.

makes an obvious difference which of these dates or periods is the true one, or even which is to be preferred. For the Saviour, as all respectable Christian writers admit, predicted, or seemed to do so, that he would come in his kingdom upon the event of the destruction of Jerusalem; and the apostles repeat the same prediction,—at least, all must admit that they seem to do so, and urge it with various considerations. If the visions of the Revelations were seen, therefore, *before* that event, John must be understood in the same manner as the Saviour and the apostles, since he uses the same language; and his predictions are, therefore, involved in the same difficulty as theirs. If the book was written, on the other hand, or the visions seen, *after* the event, as Watson concurs with what appears to have been after a time the prevailing part of antiquity in believing, then, indeed, the revelator must intend a future and distant age for the coming of Christ and the judgment. But, in this case, there is not only a very great inconsistency between the apostles generally and John, who still predicts a coming as near at hand and for the same purposes; but there is, upon the principle of a literal interpretation, a contradiction and absurdity in the prediction of a speedy coming, and in the declaration that events would *intervene* between the declaration and the advent for the space of more than a thousand years, which must utterly discredit the composition as pretending to inspiration, and fully justify those in the earlier ages who regarded it with suspicion, or treated it with contempt.

In regard to the proper date of the book, so far as our judgment respecting it may be affected by the suffrages of the ancient church, it is a very admissible principle of criticism, that that testimony is in itself to be preferred which is least likely to have been affected by prejudices. Dates

were not accurately preserved among the primitive Christians, nor were particulars of personal history always better kept, as we have sufficient reason to know ; and disappointment respecting the personal coming of Christ at the time when the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, when that event was expected, leaves it open to suspicion that, in the want of any positive evidence, as there was none, a date for the book later than the destruction of the city was assigned to it, in order to preserve its consistency ; and because John undoubtedly long survived that event, and the particulars of his history may have been in some degree confounded. A difference of opinion in regard to the real number of the Beast, some preferring 666 and others 616, affords evidence that this remarkable book did not escape a desire even to correct its statements. Some of the most eminent critics, as Moses Stuart, Bishop Newton, and Sir Isaac Newton, have been led, from the force of facts, to assign an earlier date than the destruction of Jerusalem to these revelations.*

But it may be decided, by a simple reference to the writings of the apostles themselves, what they did teach, and what expectations they actually formed, in regard to the second coming of Christ and its attendant events. This evidence will now be set before the reader.

It will be proper to arrange the passages cited under two general divisions : one consisting of unqualified passages, and the other of those which connect with the subject

* Mr. Stuart was led, by his opinion respecting the date of the Revelations, to adopt a mode of explaining them which has not commanded the suffrages of the Christian world. But the error of this eminent critic, being founded, as all other systems of interpretation must more or less be, upon the date of the book, shows the strength of his confidence in the evidence upon which his opinion was based, as well as the difficulties which have ever attended the subject of the second coming in general.

some qualifying consideration. The words in *Italic* letters are intended to denote some emphatic or important expression, and are not such as are printed in this way in the text of our common version.

I. Unqualified passages.

§ 1. Those of a very general character. — “Who shall give account to him that is *ready* to judge the *quick* and the *dead*.” (1 Pet. iv. 5.) “*But the end of all things is at hand*: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” (v. 7.) The same apostle represents the Christians whom he addressed as “*looking for and hasting unto* the coming of the day of God;” and exhorts them to this, connecting a particular expectation which he mentions: — “Wherein” — that is, in that day — “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” (2 Pet. iii. 12.) In view of such things, the apostle urges the necessity of a serious Christian life: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” (v. 11.) “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless — and account that the long-suffering of our Lord” (or the delay of the case) “is salvation.” (vs. 14, 15.) The apostle John also says, “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Little children, *it is the last time*: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” (1 John ii. 17, 18.)* In

* This epistle is commonly assigned to a much later date than its internal evidence will bear. That it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem cannot be doubted when we read the following passages: ii. 13, 14, 18; iii. 2; iv. 1.

the same tone are all the apostolic exhortations, as, for example, Paul: "Knowing the time, that *now* it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 11, 12.) "Let your moderation be known unto all men. *The Lord is at hand.*" (Phil. iv. 5.) "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more *as ye see the day approaching.*" (Heb. x. 25.)

These passages happily require no critical treatment. They establish very fully the fact that an expectation existed of the speedy coming of Christ. No doubt has ever existed that the expectation related entirely to this subject; nor can there be any doubt whatever in the case. There is nothing in the predictions of Christ, or in the writings of the apostles, which would lead us to suspect that the first Christians had in expectation any other subject than the coming of Christ, which would lead them to use such language. The last passage cited is taken from an epistle which appears to have been written at a late period in the apostle's life, and only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem.*

§ 2. The following passages are more explicit, perhaps, as showing that the event was expected while some of the existing generation would be still alive. — "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake *you* as a thief. . . . Therefore let *us* not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thes. v. 4, 6.) "For this

* The author of this epistle expresses in the most explicit manner his expectation that the Saviour was very soon to come. — "For yet *a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." — Heb. x. 37.

we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we*, which are alive and *remain* unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (anticipate) them which are asleep." (1 Thes. iv. 15. Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 52.)

The apostle plainly states, in these passages, his expectation that some whom he addressed would remain alive until the coming of Christ; which would, of course, be his second coming. The last passage shows his expectation that the resurrection would occur at the same time. That the resurrection and judgment were both expected at that time, may be sufficiently shown by two further citations.

§ 3. The resurrection and judgment expected in the first century. — "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then *we, which are alive and remain*, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17.) To Timothy the same apostle also says, "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead *at his appearing and his kingdom*." (2 Tim. iv. 1.)

Nothing further can be needed to show that the second coming of Christ, with the resurrection and the judgment, was expected to occur before all who were then living had descended to their graves. It is no part of our present purpose to explain these predictions in the way of reconciling them with any events which occurred in that age. Our aim is only now to ascertain what *was* foretold and expected.

An explanation has been offered of one of the passages in the last class of citations (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17), to the effect that the apostle refers to the resurrection spoken of

tropically or literally by John in the Revelations (chapter xx.); and that he states his expectation that some of those whom he addressed would participate in that event. This criticism, which is associated with the doctrine of those who are called adventists, has really no plausibility. None of this class of interpreters have ever conceived that any of the primitive Christians could remain alive until that event; for the event is still regarded as distant. Besides, the event is represented as a distinction conferred upon a few believers only, who were eminent for their piety or for their sufferings; and there could be but little congruity in exhorting the whole church of Thessalonica to keep themselves in a state of watchfulness, lest that day should overtake them as a thief. In fact, if there were nothing else to show that the resurrection intended by John is very different from that mentioned by Paul, such a difference would be plainly shown from the fact that Paul intends the resurrection of *all* the saints, while John expressly limits the resurrection which he intends to a part, of them alone.

II. Another class of passages, which qualify the subject in some way, will for a moment claim our attention.

Paul expected to die before the events would occur which he predicted. "For I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. . . . Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6, 8.) The same apostle expresses his ignorance of the particular time when the events which he had predicted would take place. "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye need not that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1 Thes. v. 1, 2.) He

tells the same church, that antichrist would first come. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." (2 Thes. ii. 1-3.) It is all-important to observe here that the epistles to the Thessalonians were written the first of the Pauline epistles, and long before the destruction of Jerusalem; while those in which the contrary declaration was made, that the Lord *was* at hand, were written later, and one of them — the Epistle to the Philippians — only a short time before that event.*

Among the passages, however, which qualify the expectation of the Saviour's coming, is one by Peter. This apostle replies to the mockery of those who asked "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world." We may have occasion to see subsequently that there is great importance attached to the way in which this apostle puts this objection. He represents it as an objection which was and would be made to the doctrine of the second coming. But he answered it by borrowing an idea from the Psalms, which he expressed in his own way. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" and he adds, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should

* A. D. 54 and 64.

perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter iii. 3, 8, 9. Compare Ps. xc. 4.)

We are not to infer, from any of these qualifications, that the apostles thought that the time of the Saviour's coming was distant by so great a period as a thousand years or more, since they affirm the contrary. Although Paul expected to die before the coming of Christ, this was undoubtedly contrary to his desire, and perhaps to an expectation which he had once cherished in common with others, with some of whom it was realized. He may be taken, in a particular and hitherto very obscure passage, to have earnestly desired to live until the event of the resurrection; for such seems very reasonably to have been at least a part of the import of his words, — "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. iii. 11.) If we conceive that a resurrection of all men is taught in the Scriptures, this must necessarily be all the meaning of this text, since it would be preposterous to conceive of the apostle as earnestly desiring to have part in an event from which none could be excluded; yet, if the resurrection of all men is not taught in the Scriptures, the principal meaning must be that of a desire to attain to the state of the resurrection.* Peter's allusion to a day being with the Lord as a thousand years cannot denote that the time of the Saviour's coming would be protracted even for half a century, though the duration of his advent might be much greater still; since he exhorts the *living* disciples, as we have seen, to continue in the expectation that the event would overtake some of them. It was proper to silence an adversary, who questioned the veracity of the apostles and

* The explanation which Mr. Bush has given of this passage is nothing less than absurd, that the apostle expresses his desire simply for a greater degree of personal sanctification.

disputed the Saviour's own prediction, by the observation that a day was with the Lord as a thousand years; and, indeed, the nature of this day might fitly be so expressed, since it was to be of long continuance, or since, in other words, the kingdom of Christ, which he would establish at his coming, was to endure, in some sense and in one subsequently to be explained, forever. Nor can we any more mistake the meaning of Paul, when he predicts that the advent of Christ would be preceded by the coming of anti-christ; since he says, in the same connection, that anti-christ had *already come*, only the full display and the final end of this mystery had not yet arrived, from some hindering cause which would be removed. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth [or hindereth] will let [or hinder] until he be taken out of the way." (2 Thes. ii. 7.) John, who may or may not have written later than any other apostle, expresses his belief in the actual arrival of the last time, because the apostasy predicted had already come. This passage has been already quoted. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." (1 Jno. ii. 18.) The word rendered "time" in this quotation is in the original "hour," which renders the statement more emphatic.

Aid in interpreting the Scriptures may sometimes be derived from those who lived nearest to the times of the apostles, and who we might naturally suppose would have best expressed their opinions or preserved their teachings. Facts, however, which must be more or less familiar to all who are moderately acquainted with church history, teach us to receive such testimony in the present case with much caution. The belief of the church while the apostles were

still living was not always in accordance with the apostolic teachings, and afterwards it became still more discrepant. Although the ideas entertained in the few first centuries respecting the second coming of Christ were various, yet the belief appears to have been general that Christ would first personally come in the millennium; but the excesses to which this doctrine was carried produced serious contentions. Some rejected the doctrine in its common and traditional acceptation altogether, and, like Dionysius of Alexandria, explained all the prophecies respecting the coming of Christ for the establishment of a kingdom as relating altogether to the heavenly world, or spiritually applied them. Origen, with the license peculiar to him, and with his infusions of Gnostic philosophy, explained away the resurrection altogether, if indeed any rational conception can be gathered respecting his opinions upon this subject.*

Still, the desire felt to retain the doctrine of a kingdom of Christ to be established in the world *after* a resurrection of the dead, was very great and general, and existed from the earliest times. Justin Martyr, in the Second Century, says, "I, and as many as are orthodox Christians in all respects, do acknowledge that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem rebuilt, and adorned, and enlarged." The general resurrection, however, was expected by this author to occur at a later period. Papias, a bishop of Asia Minor, who lived still earlier than Justin Martyr, appears, according to Eusebius, to have held a similar doctrine, and to have received it, as he alleged, from the apostles themselves. But, what is

* See Mosheim's Historical Commentaries on the State of Christianity during the First Three Centuries, Cent. III. § xxxviii.

more to the purpose, Justin Martyr informs us that there were "many Christians of pure and pious principles who did not acknowledge this doctrine," or who perhaps received the doctrine of the second coming of Christ in a manner different from the rest of their brethren.* If these Christians penetrated the cloud which enveloped the rest of the church, as regards this subject, we may call to mind the memorable observation of Andrew Fuller, that if the true church of Christ, as we look back to the apostolic age, is not to be found somewhere among the sects called heretical, it would be hard very often to say where it could be discovered.† But it is clear that the prophecies of the Saviour, respecting his coming and purpose to raise the dead and judge the world, were generally very literally construed in the earlier ages of the Christian church; but that the difficulties which grew out of the subject, and the Jewish doctrine of a millennium, which John uses for a particular purpose in the Revelations, led to different and contradictory explanations.‡ The time of these events was continually deferred, until some were bold enough to discredit the subject in some of its particulars altogether.

In addition to the evidence already presented, respecting the teachings and the expectations of the apostles, we may refer to the book of Revelations. As has been already

* See Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, Lec. XXV., on chap. xx. of the Revelations.

† Fuller's Lectures on Revelations.

‡ The Jews regarded the Messiah's kingdom as an earthly one, as scarcely any reader needs to be informed, in which the ordinary affairs and necessities of life would go on as usual. (Luke xiv. 15) As to a particular period of a thousand years, or a millennium, this also was a Jewish belief, which was literally accepted by the church, whatever use John may have meant to make of it, or whatever may have been intended in his prophecy.

observed, antiquity was divided upon the date of this book, and we are, therefore, constrained to resort to its internal evidence as the surest means of deciding the question.

If the Revelations were not published before the destruction of Jerusalem and the total extinction of the Jewish church and nation, when all critics admit that the Saviour was to come, and did come in some sense, they refer to some other coming *equally speedy, having the same ends, and described in precisely the same way as the apostles and the Saviour himself spoke of the second coming and of the resurrection and judgment*. As any difference, however, between John and the other apostles, upon this subject, would be inconsistent with their inspiration, we may justly conceive that they all intended the same thing. If so, John in the Revelations speaks of the speedy second coming of Christ.

Indeed, it would be impossible to shake this conclusion. John begins with the announcement that it was his purpose to make known a revelation of events "which must shortly come to pass." (Rev. i. 1.) "The time," he says, "is at hand." (vs. 3.) He speaks of the judgment in language as emphatic as is used anywhere else in the New Testament. "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (vs. 7.)

There seems also to be a concealed intimation, in accordance with the profound symbolical style of this book, which turns everything into allegory, and paints rather than relates or describes, that the Saviour would come to establish his final dispensation. He is called the "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." (vs. 8, 11.)

The book closes with declarations in all respects similar to the foregoing; and that, too, even after the glowing

description of the happiness which would exist when the world was judged, and the Redeemer's purpose was completely accomplished among mankind. "Behold, I come quickly." (xxii. 12.) "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so. Come, Lord Jesus." (vs. 20.) The Saviour is represented in a military style, as appearing in person at the head of his armies, and as overthrowing antichrist and establishing his kingdom. (xix. 16; xi. 17; xii. 10.)

The most remarkable passage, however, is that in which, after concluding the whole series or fascicle of events, the generation living when the apostle wrote is invited to come and receive the blessings of the Saviour's kingdom, and to exhort others to do the same. The revelator invites all to come and take freely of the water of life, which he saw issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This invitation was based upon the fact that Christ had caused the waters of life to flow in the world; and the abundance, certainty, and present nature of the provision, are fully denoted by the invitation to receive "freely." (xxii. 16, 17, 20.) There would be an absurdity, indeed, in supposing that this is a prophetic invitation, addressed to men in a future age, and only to them, and not to the readers to whom John addressed the book. But such a supposition is entirely precluded by the declaration that the Saviour sent his angel or messenger — that is, John — "to testify these things in the churches." And then follows the exhortation to come and take of the waters of life freely, which are described in the allegory of the book as flowing in the perfected results of the kingdom of Christ.

It is obvious, therefore, that the book of the Revelations must be construed upon a principle unknown to common allegories. It is compatible with the principles of its com-

position that the events of many ages should be prophetically detailed, and in a natural order of succession; though, like a series of pictures, the same subject may repeatedly appear upon the scene; while the *glory* of the Saviour's kingdom has in it chronologically neither beginning nor end,—like Melchizedek, who was without father or mother, or beginning of days or end of years,—and this glory may be portrayed, in glowing colors, as overspreading in some way every part of the Christian dispensation. That John regarded the Saviour as displaying the dawn of his coming, when the first successes of the Christian dispensation commenced, cannot be doubted by any one who reads the account of his visions, and attends to the evidence which convinced Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Stuart. The dawns of the Christian dispensation had appeared when John received his visions in Patmos. But these visions were intended to display the coming of his Master in his kingdom, disembarassed with the lingering remains of the Jewish polity, and which he described as near, as near to the men of his generation; and he, therefore, exhorted them to come and partake of the blessings of the New Dispensation.

So much may be said in explanation of the meaning of this remarkable book, the most gorgeous and sublime of all allegories, inspired or human, without too much anticipating the results of succeeding labors. The Saviour intimated that John would, as Paul desired to do, live to see his coming; and this apostle did not die until the Jewish dispensation was completely extinct, and the Christian dispensation was, by the judgment of God upon the Jewish church, fully inaugurated in the world: to run in a course of darkness and trials, which John powerfully but allegorically describes, until it should rise above all enemies,

and possess the undisputed dominion of the world. The memorable words must be fresh in every reader's mind: Peter seeing him (John), saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come*, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 21-23.) That John survived the destruction of Jerusalem some years, is a fact well known and universally believed.

The reader has by this time perceived that the declaration of Mr. Gibbon, that the apostles expected the speedy coming of Christ, together with the resurrection and judgment, was not the figment of a sceptical imagination; but a fact, proper, if properly used, to form a part of a regular historical narrative. It is obvious, also, that, to deny this fact, is to give an infidel adversary all the advantage, and to destroy the credit of inspiration. It is much better to seek its solution by reconciling it with history, than to undertake the fruitless and fatal task of explaining it away. There is no other alternative, but that the apostles were deceived, and their prophecies false, or that their predictions were strictly fulfilled, according to the real intention of inspiration, whatever it was. It may be thought that the case is quite as formidable in the one case as in the other; in short, that it is entirely hopeless of solution. Can it be possible, it may be asked, if a restoration to the bodily state is the true doctrine of the resurrection, that this event, with all the others associated with it, has strictly occurred? We admit, as all others have done, the formidable appearance of this difficulty. But we are not prepared to take either of the alternatives which Christians

and infidels have respectively chosen, and deny the predictions or abandon the truth of the New Testament Scriptures, even under so formidable a presentment. Nor can we admit the very hazardous conclusion, that the apostles were deceived as to their expectation of the Saviour's coming, and of the resurrection and judgment, to happen at the same time ; for their personal belief in this case is inseparable from the web of revelation ; and on the admission that the apostles taught and encouraged an error, by their personal expectations as regards these essential particulars, however it may have been as regards the manner in which the events were to occur, we admit, to all intents and purposes, that the New Testament is not worthy of belief as a true inspiration. Such a conclusion no Christian can make.

This interesting subject, besides being intimately connected with the credit of revelation, presents itself in other interesting relations. Upon the prophecies involved in this case, both in the New Testament and in the Old, millenarians of all classes, from the cultivated minds of the established church of England, to the rude and unskilful adventists or Millerites of this country, found their opinions. The question of the world's conversion — the great hope of the church at the present time — is also involved. If the subject may be cleared from its present obscurity and difficulty, the object is worthy of the most earnest exertions which any man is capable of making. In what remains of the present chapter, we shall offer one or two introductory observations, involving some important and proximate modes of solution.

First. We ought not to suppose that the New Testament was not intended to contain any subjects difficult of comprehension. The great doctrine of justification by faith

— upon a knowledge of which our salvation depends — has not proved to be easy of apprehension by all. Luther, with the hardihood peculiar to his character, rejected the Revelations from the sacred canon, on account of their obscurity, or because he could not comprehend them; but upon the same principle he should have rejected a great part of the Bible. Subjects of great difficulty, however, have subsequently been cleared up, when the purpose of God has been fulfilled; as, for instance, the prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah, or the *first* coming of Christ, which represented him as poor and rich, mean and distinguished, divine and human, mortal and everlasting, a warrior and a man of peace; and if the New Testament is an inspiration, the present subject is capable of as complete a solution.

Second. We are particularly informed that inspired men did not always nor necessarily comprehend their own messages. “The prophets” of the Old Testament “inquired and searched diligently” in regard to the redemption by Christ; “searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow: unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (1 Pet. i. 10–12.) The apostles may not have had any clearer discernment of their own prophecies when they predicted the *second* coming of Christ, and “the glory that should follow;” and it is very clear, from their way of speaking upon the subject, that they had not; and they, in turn, may be regarded as confessing that not unto themselves, but

unto us, they ministered the things with which we are now concerned. Indeed, we possess their particular statements upon this head. Paul called the subject, in several of its relations, a "mystery;" and Peter confesses his ignorance in the case in a more particular manner, and in a passage which it is of great importance to consider.

In the third chapter of the second epistle of Peter, after the scepticism in regard to the Saviour's second coming has been noticed, the apostle reâffirms the subject, and speaks of the sudden arrival of the day of the Lord, when "the heavens should pass away with a great noise," and "the elements melt with fervent heat," and "the earth and the works therein would be burned up." He refers also to the promise of a New Heavens, and a New Earth, and exhorts the Christians of his time to be upon the watch for all these things; and refers, with an acknowledgment of his embarrassment with them, to the writings of Paul for further aid. After referring to Paul, he says, "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Here the apostle, like the ancient prophets, confesses his experience of a difficulty, and acknowledges that God did not give the spirit without measure unto him. That the difficulty relates to all the subjects of the second coming is quite clear. The gender requires that "in which" should relate to "these things," or the subjects of the second coming, and not to the contents of Paul's epistles in general. Winer observes that the last explanation is inadmissible upon any sound principle of criticism.*

If the apostle, therefore, admitted the existence of a

* Winer's Grammar of the Idioms of the New Testament.

difficulty in these subjects, as he viewed them, we may credit its existence, and be cautious in our assent to any explanation, however ancient or popular, which still leaves the case unsolved. If we should still be disposed to linger in the belief that the apostle refers to the difficulty attending the explanation of the Pauline epistles in general, notwithstanding the extraordinary violation of gender in the Greek language which the explanation requires, yet, even in this case, the "things hard to be understood" might include the subjects of the second coming, since Paul speaks of them in his epistles. Still, it is impossible to conceive by what rational association of ideas a difficulty, for which he refers to Paul, should have been suggested or mentioned, unless he felt that there was a difficulty existing in regard to the subjects upon which he was speaking.

But there is a similar confession of embarrassment with the subject by another apostle, who wrote more upon it than any other inspired man. John expresses his ignorance respecting what would ensue upon the coming of Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him." (1 John iii. 2.) It is obviously necessary to take this passage in this manner, since it relates to the second coming.*

We have also noticed Paul's acknowledgment that the subject was mysterious. — "Behold I show you a mystery." (1 Cor. xv. 51.) We need nothing further, therefore, to convince us that the writers of the New Testament

* But the same apostle very clearly says, in a way which very much qualifies the confession of his imperfect knowledge of the subject, and which also must very much affect the question whether the apostles were personally deceived, that, although the world *passes away* (in a passage just now quoted) and the lust thereof, those, nevertheless, who do the will of God, will remain forever. (1 John ii. 17, 18.)

were as ignorant upon the subject of the second coming as the prophets of the Old Testament often were upon the subjects of which they wrote; and it is little less than absurd to take these subjects from their lips or pens, and to construe them all literally in every respect, without a perception of any difficulty, while they themselves particularly warn us that their own language did not convey to them perfectly intelligible ideas. It is into this absurdity that the whole Christian world has fallen.*

Third. We are prepared, therefore, to believe that the second coming of Christ must be expressed in *highly figurative language*. For, beyond all dispute, Christ has not literally come the second time, nor has the earth been consumed with literal fires, nor have we seen a literal throne of judgment set up by the Saviour in the world. In fact, symbol or allegory is the style of prophecy; and we should rather expect, in approaching a great prophecy, to find it, like all others, invested with figurative conceptions, than expressed in plain and unambiguous language. All prophecies require a key for their explanation.†

* But it is plain that it has gone further into error upon this subject, and not received all their literal statements.

† Sometimes the symbols of prophecy appear intended to deepen the allegory, and to render the meaning imperfectly explicable until the event. In the prophecy respecting the seventy weeks, in Daniel, the declaration that after sixty-two weeks the Messiah would be "cut off" would seem to relate to his death. Such is certainly the usual or most natural meaning of the expression. But, if we begin the reckoning from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, sixty-two weeks from the close of the first period of forty-nine days bring us only to the commencement of John's ministry, or to the announcement of Christ. The death of the Saviour must, therefore, be looked for in another part of this prophecy, and is found symbolically designated in the declaration that in the midst of the week he would "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Being "cut off," therefore, relates to the rejection of Christ by the Jew-

In the case in hand, several distinguished men long ago perceived that the Scriptures did not foretell a literal conflagration of the earth by fire. Prideaux, Lightfoot, and John Owen, rejected the common popular belief upon this subject. Owen observes, upon 2 Peter iii. 7, 10, that the apostle cannot intend the literal world, when he speaks of its destruction by fire, as the old world was destroyed by the flood; because, in the comparison which he institutes, the frame of the old world was not destroyed by the deluge of waters. The apostle must, therefore, whatever he intends by conflagration, mean mankind. The Jewish church or state was, in this author's opinion, the world then existing, which was intended by the apostle; and when Jerusalem was destroyed, its destruction or conflagration took place or began. The same author observes that the state of the church after the conflagration of the second world was called the age or world to come, and cites Heb. ii. 5; vi. 5, in proof.*

If the prophecies of the New Testament, therefore, are, like the prophecies of the old dispensation, figurative and allegorical, and if the apostles confess their ignorance of their real meaning in some respects, our traditional explanations, which profess to have come down from them or their followers, are of no account; and our confidence must, therefore, be shaken in the current explanations of our time. Nor can there be any doubt that our common notions

ish rulers, from the first moment of his announcement. The expression is, therefore, a true symbol, and is not literal, but denotes a rejection which would issue in death, and not death itself.

* Congregational Lecture upon Scripture and Geology, by John Pye Smith. — That the word translated “world” is used in such a way as to justify this opinion, may be seen by consulting the *Clavis* of Dr. Wahl. — Robinson's Wahl.

are wrong. And, whatever we shall discover to be the true explanation, we may now admit that it is much easier to believe that we have been mistaken, than that the apostles and the Saviour were.

We will now turn to the principal source of all the apostolic predictions of the second coming of Christ, in the Saviour's own words respecting it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROPHECY OF THE SAVIOUR RESPECTING HIS SECOND COMING.

The Contents of this Prophecy of Christ.—Meaning not at once obvious.—The Key wanted.—Opinions respecting the Meaning.—Their Diversity and Difficulties.—The Style of the Prophecy remarkably Jewish.—Significant Omission of this Prophecy in the Gospel of John.—Questionable Advantage or Practicability of Searching for a General Key to the Prophetical Style.—The Resemblance and Diversity of Prophetical Usage.—Where it is generally necessary to search for the Key of a Prophecy.—Several Keys of this particular Prophecy.—The Subject.—The Conceptions of the Disciples at the time of its Delivery not to be unqualifiedly taken.—The Apostolic Fathers.—Style of the Prophecy.—Physical Impossibilities which oppose a Literal Construction.—Warburton.—Explanations of the Saviour in regard to his Style.—The Coming of the Father predicted.—Manner of the Saviour's Advent.—Whether the Time at which it would take place can be ascertained.—Mistakes of Adventists.—Duration of the Period denoted as that of the Saviour's Advent.—Important Distinction.—Its Effects upon the Doctrine of the Judgment.—This Prophecy does not foretell the Literal Destruction of the Earth.—Design of the Second Advent.—John's Prophetical Delineations of it.—Several Immediate Results of the Attainment of the Keys of this Prophecy.—The Coming of Christ not Personal.—The Prophecy uttered under the Shadows of the Old Dispensation, and in Character with it.—When the Advent occurred.—Its Developments Numerous and Successive.—Meaning of "Flaming Fire."—The Second Coming an Advent of the Word and Promises.—Power of the Truth.—The Anti-Christian Mystery.—Imposing Nature of the Imagery.—The Imagery not so wonderful as its Literal Construction.—Examples of similar Imagery.—Trumpet of the Archangel ;

its Impressive Signification. — Mourning of the Jews. — The Grandeur of the Christian Religion ; its Truths, and its Power. — Value of the Obscurity which once rested over the Subject. — Importance of beginning the Christian Era at the Destruction of Jerusalem. — Splendors of Judaism. — Bearings of this Subject on the Plan of the Creation. — Meaning of the expression “End of the World.”

THE Saviour's own prophecies respecting his second coming are contained in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew's Gospel, in the thirteenth of Mark's, the twenty-first of Luke's, and in some shorter portions of the evangelic history.

It will be proper to make a general synopsis of these prophecies, before inquiring into their general meaning, or attempting so much of their particular explanation as has a bearing upon the present inquiry. We shall aim at the greatest precision and clearness, in the statement, of which the case will admit.

The particular occasion of the Saviour's discourse was the inquiry of the disciples, when the event of which he had been speaking would occur ; that is, when the buildings of the temple would be thrown down, and not one stone of them be left upon another. The subject was one of deep interest to them as Jews, and as associated in their minds, it would appear, with the coming of the Messiah. The question was amplified by them, and was put in the following form : “ And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ? ” (Matt. xxiv. 1-3.)

The Saviour comprised all these points in his answer. He sets out with the declaration that many would assume his name and authority, under pretence of being the Messiah, and would deceive many. The disciples were in-

structed to beware of them, and to refuse them credit; and the time, he said, was drawing near. (Matt. xxiv. 4, 5; Luke xxi. 8.) His own coming would be preceded by several events, which would be the evidences of his approach. Wars and rumors of wars, seasons of famine and pestilence, and earthquakes in various places, would occur; but the disciples would have no occasion for alarm, for these were only the beginning of sorrows, and "the end" would be yet to come. In the mean time, they would themselves become objects of persecution; and contention and treachery would enter their own households. "Parents," "brethren," "kinsfolk," and "friends," would betray one another, and deliver up to synagogues, and some they would cause to be put to death. (Luke xxi. 12; Matt. xxiv. 9, 10.) False prophets would also arise and add to the confusion of this miserable period, deceiving many; and because iniquity would abound, the love of many would wax cold. But as many as should endure to the end would be saved. (Matt. xxiv. 10-13.) Two things would denote to the disciples that the end had really come: when the apostles had gone throughout the world and preached the Gospel to all nations, and when Jerusalem should be encompassed with armies. There would then be no time for delay. He that was in Judea should fly to the mountains, and he that was upon the house-top should not come down to take anything out of the house, nor should he that was in the fields turn back to take his clothes; for the calamity would be speedy and unparalleled in the history of the nation, and then would be the days of vengeance, when all things written would be fulfilled. Lest the disciples should be involved in the destruction which would befall so many of the Jews, they should fly at the first signs that the time of this final ruin had arrived. (Matt. xxiv. 14-18; Luke

xxi. 20-22.) In order that the miseries of that period might as little as possible affect the disciples, they were instructed to pray that their flight might not be in the winter nor upon the Sabbath day, lest hardships or scruples should embarrass or hinder their flight. And, indeed, unless those days should be shortened, no one or no flesh could be saved; but, for the elect's sake, those days should be shortened. (Matt. xxiv. 20-22.) Pretensions to the Messiahship would be again renewed. But, although plausible pretexts should be urged, and great signs and wonders displayed, they were not in any instance to receive a moment's credit. If the place of the Messiah's presence should be declared, it should excite no attention. "Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 23-27.) The time and place of the Saviour's particular appearance would be determined on principles very different from those which the false Christs would assume. Indeed, the Saviour spoke enigmatically upon these points. He said, in manifest allusion to the Roman military standards, "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." (Matt. xxiv. 28.) Immediately after the tribulation of those days, he said, also, the sun would be darkened, and the moon would not give her light; the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens would be shaken. Then would appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, at which all the tribes of the earth or land would mourn; and they would see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And," it is added, "he shall send his angels with a great

sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 29-31.) "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." (vs. 34.) The remainder of the discourse is occupied with particular directions to be in readiness for the event, and with a particular account of the judgment. The different evangelists agree in a remarkable manner in their several relations of this prophecy; and where their expressions differ, light is shed upon the meaning. Their difference consists chiefly in their copiousness. Matthew is the most full, and Mark the least so.

It must be obvious to every one that the meaning of this remarkable prophecy does not lie transparently upon its surface. Its explanation would be easy, if we could immediately determine the meaning of "the end of the world," as mentioned in the question of the disciples, and what is meant by the apparent allusion to things which could not have been accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Saviour does, indeed, say that "the end" would come when the Gospel should have been preached in all nations; which may have been fulfilled before Jerusalem was taken and destroyed. But mistakes are very liable to occur in the interpretation of the prophecies; and the various fortunes of this particular one have been such as to warn us against an attempt at its positive solution until we have first supplied ourselves with the true key, beyond any doubt or question. Before looking for the means of its explanation, we may notice the principal solutions which have been offered: we shall perceive in this manner the necessity of furnishing ourselves with the real key.

There have been two principal opinions upon the general import of this prophecy: first, that it relates to the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem and of the Jewish state, and to the complete establishment of Christianity as the only authorized system of religion in the world; second, that it includes these events, together with the resurrection and general judgment to take place at the end of time. The latter opinion undoubtedly at present prevails; and, indeed, those who have held the former have generally conceived that the final judgment was some way intended.

Although much light has been cast upon the meaning of this prophecy, a satisfactory explanation of its import is generally admitted not to have been attained. Bishop Warburton, and those who have held with him the belief that the destruction of Jerusalem, with the abrogation of the Jewish law, together with the formal institution of Christianity, was alone intended, and who in many respects hold the better part of the argument, still leave the case embarrassed with the apparently very clear allusions to the judgment; and, above all, with the fact that the resurrection was to take place at the same time. This explanation, therefore, does not meet all the demands of the case.

The other opinion, that the destruction of Jerusalem and all the other events are included in the same prophecy, is embarrassed with the difficulty of determining the precise point where a transition is made from the destruction of Jerusalem and the dissolution of the Jewish state to the general judgment, nor has any search ever discovered this point.* The vast interval which it would be necessary to conceive as elapsing between the destruction of Jerusalem and the conclusion of human history, also embarrasses this explanation. It is also necessary to account, upon this hypothesis, for the almost exclusive allusions to the Jewish people, which are interwoven with every part of the

* See Doddridge.

prophecy. Reference is exclusively made to Jewish disciples, as being bound to observe the Sabbath, an obligation which the Gentiles did not feel. The exhortations to flight upon the approach of the impending calamities are made to those only who lived in Jerusalem and in the surrounding country; and when the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven, the *tribes* of the land only are represented as mourning. It has been observed, as singular, that the apostle John is the only one of the Evangelists who does not give any account of this prophecy; but, if John wrote his Gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem, as is supposed, the omission would be very significant, as showing the reference of the prophecy to Jewish affairs, the interest in which had passed away with the destruction of the city. But whether John wrote his Gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem or not, the Revelation which he wrote describes the coming of Christ, and preserves the same allusions to Jewish affairs. (Rev. i. 7.) The prophecy of Christ, therefore, has everywhere the appearance of being a Jewish prediction, or one relating exclusively to the concerns of that nation. No interpretation has hitherto removed these difficulties; the meaning of the prophecy, therefore, must be allowed to have been very unsatisfactorily determined. Millenarians, Adventists, and Universalists, still contend over its import.

In looking for the means to unlock the secrets of this remarkable prophecy, it would be futile to attempt its solution by means of a general key to *the prophetic style*. A remarkable agreement, in the prophetic language of the Bible, has been pointed out by Sir Isaac Newton, and by other writers. And, indeed, it may be noticed, by a particular attention to the Scriptures, both as respects its language and its matter, how remarkable is the fact that much

that we find in the New Testament, doctrinal and verbal, may be found contained or hidden in some germ* of the Old Testament, and parts of this may be found derived from something still older in the same system of revelation. The prophecy respecting the seed of the woman, as delivered by the Creator, contains, as a remedy and a promise, the whole doctrinal germ of the Bible.

Although this character of the Scriptures has frequently attracted attention, and particularly as regards the prophecies, — for the Revelations and even the prophecy of the Saviour reproduce the language of former prophecies, — yet the subject has attracted less attention than it deserves, and it will probably have some influence in giving us more extended views upon the inspiration of the Scriptures.

But, if one thing is frequently evolved from another in the style of Scripture, yet particular prophecies often use their own modes of expression, or a similar mode of expression has its particular meaning. A symbolical lexicon, therefore, could not be composed without first understanding every prophecy in the Bible; which would render the key of no service, except to perfect explanations already attained. *Fire*, for instance, is used in the Old Testament in such connections as to denote something respecting the divine glory or majesty. We shall immediately think of the burning bush, and of the pillar of fire, and of several declarations of the prophets. But we cannot decide from these cases that the symbol means the same thing when applied to the manner of the Saviour's coming, "in flaming fire;" when applied to the second beast, who would make fire come down from heaven, although it was to be a part of the character of antichrist that he would assume the character of God; and, finally, when used in relation to the sufferings and trials of the church itself, and to the

world, which is said to be devoted to flames. The prophecy respecting the woman's seed in Genesis will not authorize us to decide positively upon the meaning of the seed of the woman in the concluding book of the Scriptures; although this expression undoubtedly denotes the Saviour in some point of his true character.

The principles upon which the enigma of Egyptian writing was first solved, therefore, are not those by which the prophecies of the Bible are to be explained. Prophetical language is not hieroglyphical, but allegorical. In other words, there is no conventional prophetic usage which will in all cases explain the prophetic writings. Much of the prophecies is, indeed, in the condition of those hieroglyphical inscriptions where the figures are used in remote tropical meanings, at present unintelligible from the want of a key. We must, therefore, search in each prophecy itself, and in the circumstances in which it was delivered, for the particular key of its explanation; and afterwards obtain such other aid as may be at hand. This, at least, is the only mode of procedure in the present case.

It fortunately happens that the present prophecy furnishes us with two important general aids for its solution: first, as relates to *the general subject* of the prophecy; and second, as to *the nature of the language* in which it is expressed. We may discover also several intimations in it so important as to stand in the character of keys of its interpretation. They relate to *the time* of the Saviour's coming, to *the design* intended, and to the period to be occupied by his advent, or to its *duration*.

The subject of the prophecy may be undoubtedly inferred, in general, from the questions proposed by the disciples: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the

world?" The Saviour had spoken, as has been observed, of the destruction of the temple; which gave occasion for the inquiry when that event would occur, and for the other questions contained in the interrogatory. It is evident, therefore, that the disciples expected the destruction of their temple and the future coming of their Messiah, together with the end of the world, so called. It is evident, also, that the Saviour replied to all these questions collectively. Thus far the inquiry of the disciples is of great importance; for we are clearly furnished with the general subjects of the Saviour's discourse, which, being a prophecy, he saw fit not to express in his ordinary style. But, further than this, we can scarcely expect to derive any aid from these questions; because it is evident that the disciples, in common with their countrymen in general, had at that time, and long afterwards, very erroneous notions upon all the subjects of their inquiry. (Acts i. 6.) A minute attention to these questions, by a historical search for the belief existing at the time, would, however curious it might be, be rather calculated to mislead than to direct us. "The fathers" followed very closely the Jewish glosses upon these subjects; and we even find in the earliest writings of "the apostolic fathers" very confident assertions in regard to the duration of the world, taken from the same sources, which shows — if these writings can be relied upon in all respects as genuine — that inspiration did not accompany the name which these writings have taken. But no one would be willing to stake the consistency of the New Testament upon the belief of the writers of the first centuries in regard to this prophecy, any more than he would be willing to carry through an interpretation of the Old Testament by means of Jewish Talmuds.

In regard to the style of this prophecy; that it departs

widely from a literal manner, and uses language highly figurative, is manifest, without forming any judgment whatever in regard to its meaning. The Saviour obviously could not appear personally in all places at once; as the lightning cometh out of one part under heaven, and shineth unto the other part under heaven, as he said the Son of man would be in his day.* Nor, as a matter of fact, did the Saviour, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," appear literally in the clouds of heaven, amid a universal convulsion of the heavenly bodies, with the sun darkened, and the moon refusing her light, and the stars falling from heaven: that is, if we can, with any probability, suppose that the approach of the Roman armies, with their "eagles," was the cause of the troubles referred to. But, entirely irrespective of any historical explanation or probability, there is nothing probable in the conception that distant stars will fall from their places in heaven, and the system of nature go to wreck, when mankind in this world shall in some future age be judged. And the spectacle of falling stars could never be witnessed upon the earth; since, however rapidly they might move in space, our eyes could not in any moment of time distinguish this motion. But highly figurative language of this character, and precisely like it, is well known to have been used in the Old Testament to denote some temporal event, relating to nations, or to their rulers regarded as governing the world, as the heavenly bodies do the seasons.†

* Luke xvii. 24.

† Bishop Warburton has collected evidence upon this subject perfectly satisfactory. See Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, Dis. xx. Compare Is. xxxiv. 1-6; xiii. 10; lx. 20, etc.; Deut. iv. 11, Judges v. 4; 2 Sam. xxii. 12; Ps. xviii. 9; xcvi. 2, 3; Joel ii. 2; Zeph. i. 14, 15 Warburton observes, "That the old prophetic style denotes any change in the governments of the world by the obscuration of the sun or

But the Saviour delivered a portion of this prophecy to the Pharisees, who inquired of him when the kingdom of God would come. He replied to them that the kingdom of God would not come in such a manner that it could be seen by looking for it ocularly. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." And he observed to the disciples, upon the same occasion, that, as the lightning shone over the whole heaven at once, so would his coming be. (Luke xvii. 20-24.) If the event was not such as could be observed by the eye, it was certainly not literal. If the kingdom of God was also of such a nature that, while the Saviour encouraged the belief that it was still to come, he could still, in reply to the question when it would come, say that it already existed among the Jews, or in the hearts of some of the nation, it certainly could not be expected that an observation, or looking out for its visible approach, would ever distinguish its coming.

But, if any doubt should remain whether the Saviour intended that his coming should be understood in a literal or personal manner, one or two further references will set the matter at rest. The Saviour, it will be recollected, referred again to his coming in his farewell discourse with his disciples; and he told them, at the same time, that he did not speak unto them "plainly," but addressed them "in proverbs;" although he assured them that at some future period, or after his decease, he would more plainly show them his meaning. He seems carefully to avoid saying that he would *speak* his meaning; but he would

moon, or by the extinction of the stars of heaven, and indicates the rise and establishment of new dispensations by processions in the clouds, by the sound of trumpets, and the assembling together of hosts and congregations.

“show” it unto them. (John xvi. 25.) He had said, “Yet a little while, and *the world* seeth me no more; but *ye see me*: because I live, ye shall live also.” (xiv. 19.) The disciples were perplexed with this observation, and inquired how he would manifest himself unto them and not unto the world. The Saviour replied by saying, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and *we will come* unto him, and make our abode with him.” (vs. 22, 23.) The coming of the Father, which is here stated as plainly as that of the Saviour, could not be of a visible or personal nature. The Saviour, therefore, *explained* his meaning to be very different from that of a literal coming. Paul uses language precisely similar: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto *them that look for him* shall he appear the *second* time without sin unto salvation.” (Heb. ix. 28.) This passage, so remarkably agreeing, in its parabolical style, with the citations from the discourse of the Saviour, forcibly recalls to mind the Saviour’s promise that the Spirit, whom he would send, would bring all things to remembrance which he had spoken. While the apostles did not, as is very certain, comprehend the Saviour’s prophecy respecting his coming, this exact adhesion to the very mode in which he spoke of that event very strikingly shows to what extent their minds were under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It should be also observed that the Saviour very covertly intimated that he would never personally come again, by declaring that he would send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to abide with them forever; and that it was necessary that he should personally depart, for the bestowment of this gift. The Spirit, in short, would not come into the world while he was in it. (John xiv. 16; xvi. 7.)

If the coming of Christ was not literal, the manner in which he would come could not be any more so. Coming in the clouds of heaven, the shaking of the powers of heaven, and sending angels abroad with a sound of trumpet, is language used in the manner of the ancient prophets, and is symbolical. The symbolical style is, therefore, used in this prophecy, and the common character of prophetic writings must attach to it. We shall need, however, some other help, to enable us to solve the mysteries of this prophecy in a satisfactory manner.

It is important to know whether the Saviour anywhere fixed the *time* of his coming. That he did do this, is very clear. There is no dispute with any one that the Roman armies are denoted in this prophecy, under the image of the eagles which would be gathered together, and by their idolatrous standards. Immediately after the event universally explained in this way, he said that he would come. The day and the hour he did not predict, since they were known to the Father only. (Matt. xxiv. 36.) But the event would occur immediately after another event; and that event was the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, which is undoubtedly to be explained by the Roman invasion. (xxiv. 15, 29, &c.)

But there is a much more important statement respecting the time. It is generally believed that the day of judgment is intended in the representation that the Saviour would come in the clouds of heaven, and that he would send his angels abroad with a great sound of a trumpet. But, at the close of *all* the predictions, after everything has been mentioned, it is said, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (xxiv. 34.) All the evangelists agree exactly in representing the Saviour as saying that *that generation* would

not pass away until all the things mentioned in the prophecy had been fulfilled. (Compare Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32.)

The force of this passage obviously depends upon the meaning of the word "generation," or the expression "this generation." The natural import of the word so translated is, incontestably, precisely that of the English word generation, or the period of one human life. It is one of those words in regard to which a mistake is less likely to occur; since it does not denote an idea of the mind, or some relation imperfectly known, but an unchangeable fact, that mankind are born and pass away in regular successions or generations. It is impossible that any critic should hesitate as to the meaning of this expression, any more than that he should doubt what was meant when it was said, "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep" (Acts xiii. 36), or when Mary said, "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke i. 48). In the Old Testament it is said, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." (Eccl. i. 4.)

Some, whose opinions have been embarrassed with this particular word in this prophecy, have sought for some extraordinary meaning in the word generation. The class of Adventists who believe that the Saviour is personally to appear and to reign in the world previous to the final consummation, endeavor to fix the meaning of "race" as the explanation of the word; making the passage mean "this race, or the Jewish race, shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled." But it is only the necessity arising from the opinions held by this class of writers which leads to this explanation; nothing whatever in the context would suggest any such meaning. Happily, however, a particular criticism upon this rendering is not necessary; since, if any

uncertainty might attach to the meaning of the word, or to the particular expression "this generation," there can be none in the words of the Saviour, "*Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*" (Matt. xvi. 28.) This declaration is varied in Mark ix. 1. — "Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." The Saviour made this declaration, when speaking of the same subjects, in all their extent, as those which are embraced in this prophecy, as will be seen in the following quotation. He says, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. xvi. 27.) Paul also shows what events would be connected with the coming of Christ. "I charge thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." (2 Tim. iv. 1.) Nothing can be plainer, then, than that the Saviour said he would come again and raise the dead, while some who heard him speak would remain alive. And we have previously seen how truly the apostles understood the subject in this manner.

The period to be occupied by the Saviour's advent is another important point of attention. Several statements of this memorable prophecy suggest a long duration of the time which is denoted as that of the Saviour's coming. There are two, in particular. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 31.) It will be noticed that this denotes something very different from the preaching of the "Gospel of the kingdom" (vs. 14), or the proclamation that the kingdom of Christ was to come,

which was to be for a *witness* to all nations. This was to take place *before* the destruction of Jerusalem; the other, *after* that event. The two things are spoken of in every respect in a very different manner. The extent to which the messages would be borne is much more emphatically stated in the latter case. It is universal. The end is different. The former preaching of the Gospel was for a witness or a sign. The mission last mentioned is for a sign of nothing, but is for the effectual gathering together of the elect everywhere. The agents are differently mentioned. The proclamations of the Gospel, or the first announcements of the Christian dispensation, were made by the apostles, and by any who chose to carry the declaration that a new and permanent dispensation was to be set up. They are sometimes called heralds. But those who conduct the present mission are called "angels," or messengers, as the particular servants of the Saviour in his actual kingdom. In fact, those thus denominated and commissioned were to commence their work when the apostles were generally deceased, as all except John died or suffered martyrdom before the destruction of Jerusalem, from which point these messengers were to be sent abroad. The generality of interpreters conceive that there is a reference in this case to the judgment; which cannot indeed be well doubted, since the Saviour was to come and judge the world, and these messengers are sent for the purpose of separating the elect from the rest of mankind. The passage is exactly parallel with Matt. xiii. 41, 49. — "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. . . . The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just." But the judgment of mankind must, as we have seen, occupy a considerable space of time. But

also the commissioning of these new agents, and the commencement or inauguration of this work, were events to take place in the generation to which the Saviour spoke. Our views of the judgment must be, in some respects, though not as regards its nature essentially, or its results, affected by this fact. We cannot, at least, doubt that the time which would be occupied by the Saviour's advent was considerable.

Another remarkable declaration, to the same effect, may be noticed in this prophecy. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 24.) Without attempting at present any deeper insight of this passage, it is obvious that much time must be required to fulfil this prediction. In fact, the immediate termination of the residence of man upon the earth in a state of probation, to take place at the Saviour's coming, is nowhere mentioned in this prophecy. The Jews remain at the present time as much dispersed as ever; Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles; and Paul assures us that no essential improvement will take place in the condition of this race "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," when "all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. xi. 25, 26.)

Upon the *design* of the Saviour's coming little needs to be said at present, any further than that it was for the establishment of the kingdom of God. It was unquestionably the great purpose of the Saviour's advent to establish a kingdom of grace, or a spiritual dispensation, in the world. This fact was predicted by Daniel, and everywhere else in the Old Testament; and is frequently reëffirmed in the New Testament, both by the Saviour and his apostles.

John, in the Revelations, represents this cause as experiencing various fortunes. He depicts it under the image of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, and as experiencing opposition from sources which he denotes, under the idea of brutal monarchies, as the Jewish church fell into the hands of Oriental despotisms. But he represents it, nevertheless, as ultimately prevailing. Although the images are different, the purport is undoubtedly the same as that of Daniel; and this cause would diffuse itself in a gradual manner, and, like the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, it would increase and fill the earth. "Even so," says the pious revelator; "even so." "Amen." "Surely, I come quickly."

The reader will now be prepared for several observations upon the remarkable prophecy to which we have now furnished ourselves with a key, and which will be found very greatly to facilitate the inquiry respecting the plan of the creation. Without an explanation of this prophecy, the solution of the great problem would be entirely hopeless.

I. We have seen that the coming of Christ was not intended to be literal. The style of the prophecy was in agreement with the dispensation under which it was uttered. "Jesus Christ," says Paul, "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Rom. xv. 8.) It was proper, therefore, that he should speak under the cloud which would break away in the brightness of his coming. His first coming was not in the full character of the Messiah, as a king, but as a teacher and a sacrificial lamb. It was not until the attainment of his renovated humanity — that character and form which redeemed man is ever to wear — that he became invested with power as King of kings and Lord of lords. In the days of his flesh he was

weak and dependent ; but in the travail of his suffering life his universal empire was born.

We have seen, however, that the Saviour predicted his actual enthronement, or coming as the promised royal Messiah, while some of the generation which he addressed remained still alive. By universal agreement, everything points to the destruction of Jerusalem as the time when he came, if he came at all. And he actually came then, according to the intention of his prediction, or else the reconciliation of the Scriptures with one another is impossible, and the words of the Redeemer of mankind must be classed with the idle tales of weak and deluded humanity.

Nor can there be any other than a *second* coming, without equally destroying the truth of the Scriptures. The second coming is represented as decisive for the great purposes of the divine economy in the world. Paul speaks of this event as the coming "the second time." (Heb. ix. 28.) *The Saviour can never be expected, therefore, to come in a personal manner. His second coming has, at least as regards the beginning or inauguration of the event, been accomplished ; and no other is predicted in the Scriptures.*

But, as we have seen, the time occupied by this advent is considerable. In fact, there are several stages or degrees of this coming. Paul predicts the destruction of the Man of Sin, as effected by *the brightness* of the Saviour's appearance. (2 Thes. ii. 8.) This interesting declaration shows that the advent of Christ was not personal, since it was a progressive event, as brightness of the coming plainly denotes. It cannot take place with a physical brightness investing the Saviour's person, since he will not personally come ; nor can it be with literal fires that the anti-Christian powers will be consumed from the earth. Literal

fire, therefore, cannot be meant, when it is said that the Saviour will come in "flaming fire." In accordance with these ideas is the declaration, in the same passage which contains the statement that the Man of Sin would be destroyed by the brightness of the Saviour's coming, that this destruction will be effected by the Spirit of the Saviour's mouth — a declaration which undoubtedly explains the other. In the same manner, John represents the Saviour as appearing with a sharp sword going out of his mouth. (Rev. xix. 15.) It may be still further observed, — as it must be obvious to every one acquainted with the predictions respecting the anti-Christian powers of the world, namely, that their destruction would conclude the series of the Saviour's conquests over his enemies, — that the lapse of very long periods is denoted by all the prophecies upon these subjects.

We cannot doubt, therefore, that the coming of Christ is *an advent of his word and promises, or a regeneration of the world by the Gospel*. The increasing power of Christian truth and of Christian virtue will destroy all enemies, or unseat their power. This is a very intelligible and valuable fact. The providence of God will dispose of the wicked at their death, and control them while living; and will make an effectual disposition of fallen angels — which does not seem to be obscurely alluded to in the Scriptures. But the kingdom of God will be won by the truth, with its legitimate effects upon the human heart. And nothing have the enemies of religion so much dreaded and so steadily opposed as the truth. The kingdom of anti-christ is a kingdom of darkness, where light enough exists only to bewilder. Christ is named in it in real mockery. He is favored in it, and abandoned, as in the iniquitous court of Pilate; and Barabbas is chosen, and given to a

clamoring priesthood. "Mystery" is the character of this false Christianity — the proper character of a delusion compounded of light and darkness. But the admission of the light in its brightness will consume this false religion. The spirits which haunt its pompous aisles will be expelled, pierced and withered with the arrows of the truth; and the shell of its Gothic establishments will be left, to be converted to more peaceful uses than those of frenzied impostors, or conspirators against the happiness of mankind. Its architecture and its memory will undoubtedly long remain as a derision, and as a fearful lesson for the world. Every hour is writing upon this masterpiece of Satan more legibly than ever its proper designation, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. The Christian world has occasion to take alarm at the wars for tradition and for metaphysical distinctions which exist in it, lest it should virtually or really constitute a part of this system of abominations, which bore in John's vision a seven-fold offspring in its womb; and to be zealous for the cultivation of the charity which is the end of the commandment. Persecution for the truth's sake is a very clear and hateful distinction of the apostasy; and the real friends of the Redeemer's kingdom have no occasion to dread the utmost dissemination of the Scriptures, or of a knowledge of their truths.

II. It must be allowed that coming in the clouds of heaven, the darkening or extinction of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars from heaven, are very bold imagery. But such imagery is, after all, too common in the Scriptures to excite surprise; it is more an occasion of wonder that a belief in its literal character should have held so long. In the New Testament, the dragon, or persecuting power, is represented as sweeping down with his

tail a third part of the stars of heaven. The punishment of an ancient nation, long since extinct, or of several of them, is depicted by one of the prophets in language, if anything, much stronger than anything found in the Saviour's prophecy. The host of heaven are represented as dissolved; the heavens as rolled up like a scroll, with all their host fallen down, as a vine and a fig-tree shed their leaves or fruit; and the sword of the Lord is represented as sweeping through the skies bathed in the *blood* of the stars. And all this relates to the punishment of an ancient people. (Is. xxxiv. 1-6.)

But there is a case, exactly parallel to the Saviour's prophecy, to be found in the Acts of the Apostles. Peter explains the gift of tongues and other events connected with the day of Pentecost, by a reference to a passage in Joel (ii. 28, &c.), which he pronounces to have been a prediction of these events. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. *And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.*" (Acts ii. 14, &c.) It is sufficient that we have an inspired statement that this prophecy was not to be taken altogether in a literal manner.

When angels are represented as sent out with a great sound of a trumpet to gather together the elect of God, this

manifestly refers to the preaching of the Gospel for the effectual establishment of Christianity. The event was to take place immediately after the investment of Jerusalem with the invading army. The word angel is well known to denote a messenger ; and, in the Saviour's prophecy, when celestial messengers or angels are meant, they are particularly distinguished as "*the angels of heaven ;*" as when it is said, that not the angels of heaven, but the Father only, knew the day and the hour of the second coming. (Matt. xxiv. 36.)

There is nothing new in this last explanation, as may be seen by consulting Doddridge and Scott. But the preaching of the Gospel is certainly invested with very great dignity by this explanation, though none too much so. The proclamation of the truths of the Gospel is a summons, like a great sound of a trumpet, to the world. It was such when first made in an age of heathenism and of Jewish superstition. Light was poured by it upon dark questions which the human mind had never been able to settle. The nature of God, and the origin of the world, were cleared of the mists which philosophy had hung about them. The existence of the soul after death, which the greatest wisdom of antiquity could not prove, was both proved and exemplified ; and the fact of a restoration of man to a bodily state was completely established as an article of faith. Justification by faith was also one of the powerful doctrines of Christianity. It is, in fact, a great key to unlock the wisdom of the divine economy in this world. But by this truth also man is taught to avoid the error by which a hope of salvation is built upon personal merit or ceremonial observances. It teaches a religion of the heart, and discloses the only practicable or possible means of effectually elevating the condition of man to its highest points.

All these truths were a great sound of a trumpet both to the Jewish and the heathen world, as the truths of Christianity have since been. Wickliffe lifted up a great trumpet when he delivered the messages of the Gospel in the midst of the deepest corruptions of the apostasy. And it was a mighty blast which Luther and his associates blew at the Reformation. The whole world was certainly moved everywhere at this summons, and Gog and Magog and the armies of Christ were set, or began to be arrayed, in very clear opposition to each other. Nor has the preaching of the Gospel ever ceased to be a great sound of a trumpet. The assemblies that are weekly collected by it are an evidence of its power. And when the pardon of sin, the beauty and worth of Christian virtue, and an everlasting life of happiness and perfection, are set before the mind, the effect upon the human heart must be allowed to be powerful indeed. But the trumpet is blown when the world is warned of the consequences of sin. It is an awful trumpet, which bids the sinner repent or meet an angry God.

But the coming of Christ would particularly cause all the tribes of the earth or the land to *mourn*, as they saw the advent of his dispensation attended with power and great glory. Nor can this prediction be less satisfactorily explained. A manifest power, which Gibbon along with Mosheim has undertaken to solve, attended the propagation of the Gospel.

From small beginnings, from a state of weakness, surrounded with enemies, loaded with the stigma of having derived its existence from a malefactor who was executed under a Roman governor, and without skill in its visible conductors, it made its way until it was diffused over the Roman empire, and till it supplanted all the religions

collected in the imperial city, and became the religion of the world.

It was a source of mortification and of helpless distress to the Jews, to see what they regarded as being a spurious offshoot of their religion, and an enemy to their faith, overpowering it in splendor, and growing stronger while itself grew weaker. The tribes of the nation, which had sealed their faith upon their native soil by pouring out upon it the blood of the Redeemer, had the horror of seeing their land fall into the possession of strangers; and, as captives and as wanderers, of seeing the religion which they had hoped to extinguish growing upon the soil which they were required to leave. On many an occasion did they "gnash their teeth" at the bold declarations of the preachers of the Gospel, derived from their prophets and the law, which were adduced in support of Christianity, and which they could not refute; and without an oracle, or help from God, they sat "in outer darkness," and saw, in the teachings and evidence of the primitive Christians, "Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out."

Nor has their mourning ceased. After the lapse of nearly eighteen hundred years, Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles; and there is some probability that the land of their fathers will be, for ages to come, the resting-place of the stormy nations of the East. The power which first accompanied the diffusion of Christianity attends it still. If it was ever hoped that the Christian religion would soon fulfil its course upon the earth and disappear, that hope is vain. Christianity is now a power at the present time more formidable than in any other period of its history. The civilization, the respect, and the hopes, of mankind, are associated with it or collected in it. It may be said to have struck its roots in the civilization of the world. Its power,

whenever it has experienced a decline, has increased with every development of its doctrines. Its vigor exists in its truths, and in its power to convince the understandings of men.

There has ever been, to be sure, a false Christianity and a true. The true will prevail. The adulterous marriage with heathen philosophy still remains. The unhallowed union with heathen superstition still continues. The throne of the Cæsars is occupied by a Christian priest. But, if the sword is used or the cloak of philosophy is worn, it is the church to which these characters apply, and not Christianity. "The woman's seed" has never yet formed an adulterous union. In other words, Christianity itself is not any more responsible than the light for the evils with which it mingles. Nothing has ever yet touched its pure substance to corrupt it; and it will finally, when its end has come of shining into the darkness, disengage itself from false associations, and appear and forever shine with the brightness which would attend the Saviour's effectual coming. The Jew will at length be convinced that his opposition is vain; and will recognize the sign of the Son of man in heaven, at first seen in a cloud, but at length discovered in its proper brightness and glory, with the cloud withdrawn.

We naturally inquire why the Saviour should have clothed so important a part of his instructions in so much obscurity; and the answer is easy. "Prophesying," says an apostle, "serveth not them that believe not, but for them which believe." (1 Cor. xiv. 22.) It is clear that this prophecy could never have been written for the enemies of religion, from whose understandings it was put remote indeed. And it would have proved an obvious injury to Christianity had the abolition of the Jewish institutions, and the establishment of Christianity upon its ruins, been so

clearly predicted that the fulfilment of the event should have drawn the masses of the Jewish people into the Christian societies. The inflooding of the Jews in the church could have had no other result than the absorption of Christianity again into Judaism, as it almost extinguished its Christianity to receive the numerous converts which it afterwards won from heathenism. The church became Roman and anti-Christian by the latter event. The Saviour seems to have been particularly guarded in his instructions to the Jews, and to have been slow in allowing the bruit of his Messiahship to prevail, for reasons which we may believe to have been prudential and far-sighted in the highest degree. He said that he spoke to them in parables, and assigned as a reason, that he did not wish to convert or disciple them, on account of their blindness. One of the most remarkable passages in the Bible (Mark iv. 11, 12) seems capable of explanation in this way.

The reason why the Saviour should have fixed upon the destruction of Jerusalem as the epoch of the formal inauguration of Christianity, is not difficult. The Jewish church, although existing in a transient and partial economy, was of God; and while it remained in existence, unabolished by any divine statute, it could not have been opposed, as not belonging to a true religious dispensation. A great lustre belonged to the history of this church. Its rebellions were instructive to mankind. Men of the greatest endowments, and possessing a purity of character unrivalled and unequalled, had adorned its existence. No man appears in the history of the world who can overshadow the glory of Moses. There never was any acuteness of apprehension greater than that of Job, or than the author of the book which bears his name. It is, like the dialogues of Plato, a moral drama, but far surpasses them in the value of its

instructions, and in the sublimity of its style. Antiquity cannot produce a writing of higher merit. The practical wisdom of Solomon is unequalled. The genius of his father, the royal lyrist, was still greater; but the exquisite beauty and tenderness of those songs, which, although inspired, are still his, display him in a character far higher than that of a poet, — in that of a man of supereminent goodness. The visions of Isaiah are unmatched in splendor. The names of Daniel, Elijah, and Samuel, would have adorned any history. Besides, the Jewish church was the light of the world. Its religious doctrines had diffused their light among the pagan nations of Asia, and had probably assisted in raising its greatest teacher, Zoroaster, and had cast their rays as far as China, girdled with her mountains. Abraham was a name known throughout the East. The legislative code of Moses and his cosmogony have also a history of their own; and Greece and Rome, and even Egypt, were probably not without indebtedness to those great writings. Such a dispensation could not be lightly abolished, nor could its abrogation be declared without the clearest evidence of the divine will. In fact, the apostles treated the Jewish economy with respect. The Saviour whom they preached was a Jew after the flesh, and was to be the deliverer of the Jewish race. The truths which they proclaimed were Judaism in a higher state of development. The Saviour was the great sacrifice upon which all the shadows of the ceremonial law collected. The great Epistles of the Romans and Hebrews are demonstrations that all the elements of Christianity lay in the Jewish Scriptures. Christ was the great teacher, and the successor of Moses, whom that lawgiver had commanded the nation to hear.

It was not, therefore, until the Jewish institutions were

formally abolished, that Christianity could appear before the whole world as the only existing dispensation of God. It was proper, therefore, that such an event should be attended with circumstances which would mark it forever in the memories of that people and in the history of the world. Such an event was the destruction of Jerusalem; when the entire overthrow of the Jewish government took place, when neither ruler nor temple any longer existed, when the long line of prophetic glories ceased forever, and the festivals or great ceremonies of the religion of the nation could no more be observed. The Jews might, in their dispersion, cherish a hope of their Messiah; but the worship of their religion was effectually abolished in their native land, nor did their Scriptures anywhere give them hopes of its restoration.

The designation of the event by which their institutions were abolished, as a "coming," corresponded with the style of the Hebrew Scriptures, in which divine judgments are denoted as "visitations." Their Scriptures closed with an announcement of this event, under this character. "The messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But *who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.*" "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi, chapters iii. iv.)

III. This subject may, in conclusion, be brought to some bearing upon the great design of this work.

We shall discover nothing in this prophecy which will

bring us to the conclusion that the history of this world is soon to terminate, or will ever end. The perpetuity of the kingdom which would be established on the earth, and its perpetuity *upon* the earth, are plainly declared. The angel said to Mary, in regard to the son whom she should bear, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne of his father David*. And he shall reign over *the house of Jacob forever*; and of his kingdom *there shall be no end*." (Luke i. 32, 33.) Daniel predicted this kingdom as a *terrestrial* one, appointed to succeed the four great monarchies upon the earth; and he also declares its perpetuity. (Daniel, chap. vii.) The perpetuity of David's kingdom is not less plainly stated. (Ps. lxxxix. 28-37.) We shall find it necessary, however, to notice the subjects of the resurrection and judgment, which appear to oppose obstacles to a belief of this doctrine. As the results to which we shall arrive will be important, it will be fit to discuss these subjects at length. Two other remarks only seem to be necessary at the conclusion of the present chapter.

The expression "end of the world" may be taken, as has been frequently done, as the end of the age, or of the Jewish dispensation. When Paul says, "Now all these things are written for our admonition, upon whom the *ends of the world* are come," he could have meant only the termination of the Jewish world or age. (1 Cor. x. 11.)

When the Saviour says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," the language is in the style of a proverb, and may be equivalent to what was said upon another occasion — "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke xvi 17.) Bishop Newton treats the declaration as

hyperbolical, characteristic of the oriental style ; and the style of the prophecy is certainly hyperbolical or allegorical. But it was the declaration of the apostles that the heavens and the earth would pass away or vanish at the coming of Christ (1 John ii. 17 ; 2 Peter iii. 10), and some tropical meaning might be sought, therefore, in these ideas. The meaning might, therefore, be found in the Saviour's prophecy itself, in which "heaven" symbolized the Jewish state or rulers ; and the counterpart, or the "earth," would, in the style of prophecy, have denoted the people ; and nothing is plainer than that the Jewish government passed away, and the nation also. But it is sufficient to take the meaning in the hyperbolical style of Eastern expressions. "Heaven and earth shall vanish or come to nothing, and my words not vanish or come to nothing." This, turned into our idiom, would be, "Let the heavens or the sky fall, and my words will not come untrue." The particular form in which the Saviour expressed himself, as just now alluded to, would seem to show that this was his meaning ; in short, "It is *easier* for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN THE SAVIOUR'S PROPHECY, PARTICULARLY THAT OF THE JUDGMENT.

Magnitude of the Present Inquiry. — The Subject of the Judgment worthy of a New Examination. — Reality of the Doctrine of a Judgment. — Daniel's Prediction of such an Event. — The Complex Nature of the Subject. — Light cast upon the Obscure Subject of the Millennium from the Comparisons made. — Misapplication of this Idea. — Sublimity of the True Conception. — The Saviour predicted Two Judgments, or a Judgment under a Protracted Character. — The Remarkable Prophecy of the Reigning of Christ, and his Resignation of a Kingdom, also elucidated by this Subject. — Remarkable Light cast upon the Plan of the Creation. — The Judgment inaugurated at the Destruction of Jerusalem — Meaning of the word "Day" as applied to the Judgment. — Various Conceptions applied to the Subject. — Explanation of several Obscure Passages. — Saints Judges of the World. — Kingdom of Heaven. — Eternal Life a Distinct Subject. — No Passages not in Harmony with the Explanation given of the Judgment. — Power of the Doctrine of the Judgment unchanged. — A Particular, a Continuous, and a General Judgment. — Power of True Christianity. — Right and Wrong of the Adventists. — Magnitude of the Expectation of the World's Conversion to Christ.

WE now approach a deeply interesting and important part of this prophecy ; and where, besides its ultimate bearings upon the plan of the creation, we shall obtain a remarkable confirmation of some facts already established,

and establish also some other momentous facts of revelation.

It cannot be doubted by any one that the intrinsic and historical importance of the doctrines of the resurrection and judgment render them worthy of a new and full examination. The cause of truth can lose nothing, but must gain everything, by setting them firmly upon their proper evidence.

The practices, and to some extent the opinions, of the Christian world, have generally undergone more or less change as regards one or both of these subjects. Few would now undertake to describe the interesting subject of the resurrection in the style which was common in preceding generations. There would appear to be something grotesque, as well as untruthful, in the representation of that event as occurring in such a manner that bone would fly to bone, and the air be filled with particles of sepulchral or human dust, flying to meet their fellow-particles, to effect a literal restoration of each, even 'the most minute, portion of the body abandoned to decay, which had resolved into its elements, and been left to the mercy of every accident on sea and land. It is surprising that the ludicrous inconsistency of such representations never arrested the eloquent tongue, while discoursing in this strange manner upon one of the most sublime and important of scriptural truths.

Nor has it, though less generally and powerfully, failed to suggest itself to the mind, that the representation of all the past, present, and future millions of mankind, as literally assembled within sight and hearing around the literal throne of the Redeemer at the same instant, and as receiving their judgment in one day, has something improbable and unreasonable in its nature. It is inconceivable that so many should all be individually judged in one day ;

and, upon any present optical and acoustic principles, that all should see and hear, or see only, the Redeemer at the same time.

Christians, however, have always believed that the Scriptures teach a resurrection of mankind and the general judgment of men and angels, both events to take place in this world. The universal belief, and the powerful influence of these doctrines, give good reason to expect that, even upon the most rigid examination, the Scriptures will be found to sustain them.

As regards the judgment, — an event of this kind was predicted by Daniel in his prophecy respecting the four great monarchies, and respecting the final dominion of all, or the fifth monarchy, which he variously distinguishes as the kingdom of heaven, the dominion of the saints, and that of the Son of man. This final kingdom would consume all other kingdoms, and would be perpetual upon the earth (“under the whole heaven”). It would commence before all the other universal or great kingdoms had entirely fulfilled their course. The point of the commencement of this kingdom is very plainly stated to be the time of the advent of the Messiah. (Compare Dan. ii. 24–44; vii. 11, 12, 18, 27; ix. 24.) The last of the four worldly monarchies would be overthrown by an event called the judgment. This judgment, however, does not correspond with that which is mentioned in the New Testament as occurring at the Saviour's second coming, when he would “judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;” * but it would take place after, and indeed long after, that event. It is mentioned in the following manner by the prophet: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as

* 2 Tim. iv. 1.

snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousand ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." (vii. 9-11.) The prophet further says of it, "But the judgment shall sit, and they [the saints] shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (vii. 26.) The judgment thus predicted is explained by the prophet as relating to the destruction of the "little horn," — a particular designation of the last form of the fourth monarchy. (vii. 8, 21, 22.)

This prophecy is highly important as explaining the New Testament. There can be no doubt whatever that it relates to the same subject as the prophecy of John in the Revelations respecting the last beast, — who would be overthrown in a similar manner. And it will be perceived that the prediction of Daniel is in precisely the same terms as that of the Saviour and the apostles respecting the judgment at the second coming. The language of the New Testament would seem to be borrowed from this source.

But it is manifest that the judgment foretold by Daniel is not the same as that which is foretold in the New Testament as immediately to take place when the Saviour would come the second time. The prophecy of Daniel corresponds with that of John respecting the second beast. Light is cast upon several predictions of the New Testament by this fact.

We cannot doubt that we may clearly determine in this

way the general meaning of the very difficult prophecy contained in the twentieth chapter of the Revelations. A judgment is here predicted, associated with an account of a thousand years, or the millennium. We cannot doubt that this event is precisely the same as that of the prediction in Daniel. The judgment is protracted in both cases. In one, it lasts for a thousand years, and terminates, after an interval, with a signal catastrophe; and in the other the duration is not definitely mentioned. (Dan. vii. 26.) In both cases, the judgment precedes the eternal and uninterrupted course of the kingdom of God. In both cases, the saints exercise judgment. (Dan. vii. 22; Rev. xx. 4.) And in both cases, the judgment begins with the condemnation and punishment of the beast. As to the last case, the allusions in the Revelations, so far as regards this particular chapter, are covert (verse 4); but we must think that a special meaning, perhaps alluding to a decapitation of the understanding, is intended, and particularly from what immediately precedes in the prophecies of this book, and from a comparison of the twentieth and eleventh chapters of the general prophecy.

What is meant in general by the millennium, or the thousand years, is therefore plain. The time thus denoted occupies a period previous to the complete dominion of Christ, when a judgment is exercised; which is predicted in Daniel and John in ways which explain each other. Before, however, the triumphant establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, a season is interposed, during which Satan will exercise his power with renewed energy. But the vast multitudes whom he will succeed in deluding, denoted as Gog and Magog, will be overcome; when the Redeemer's kingdom will commence its uninterrupted and everlasting course.

The appellation of millennium is, therefore, entirely misapplied to the complete regeneration of mankind. It rather denotes what we mean by the general judgment, or more properly the events which will precede the great issues of this final catastrophe. It may express the general idea of the conversion of the world, or of a considerable part of it; since the period is represented, perhaps, as on the whole one of great religious prosperity. But the fact that the complete subjection of the world to Christ is to succeed the millennium, shows that the entire purity of the church is not to be expected at that time.

We would not undertake to disengage all the covert allusions in this wonderful prophecy, which can penetrate so great a distance of time. It may teach, under the image of the spirits of the resuscitated martyrs,—for the prophecy is an allegory, as it would seem no one could doubt,—that the resolute character of those who had maintained the faith in every danger in other ages would be reproduced in other persons. It may denote, under such allusions, that persecutions will be revived; but that the saints will nevertheless exercise a real and effective judgment, and carry off the palm of victory, during that period.

But the comparison of the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, which is attended with such interesting results, is attended with others still more important. We learn that there are *two* great periods of judgment, or even three: one commencing the Christian age; another some time preceding the final dominion of Christ or the entire recovery of mankind, who are to live on the earth; and another immediately preceding this event.

We have seen that a judgment was to take place at the commencement of the Christian age; and we have now also seen that John predicted one other or two other events

of this kind. An attention to the Saviour's prophecy will show that he made a similar distinction. His appearance in the clouds of heaven, and the commission of his angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other, would seem to denote the judgment which we find mentioned everywhere in the New Testament as immediately attending or inaugurating the second coming. But what the Saviour says, in the succeeding chapter (xxv. 31, 32),—that, when the Son of man would come *in his glory*, and *all* the holy angels with him, and he should sit upon the throne of his glory, he would gather all nations before him,—may relate to a different event, or to the same event as protracted, and contemplated at a later period; for *all* the messengers of Christ, or the preachers of the Gospel, could not have existed when the Saviour came at the destruction of Jerusalem. The word “glory” may also be emphasized.

The judgment predicted by the Saviour, however, may relate to one event, as is perhaps most likely, but which we find by other prophecies is more distinctly marked by several epochs. It is in this case continuous, and extends over the whole period included between the coming at the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete dominion of Christ after the millennium. It was specially signalized at first by the condemnation of *the Jews*; as it will be afterwards by the condemnation of *the Gentiles*, who would be led away by the apostasies predicted in the Revelations.

That the judgment principally mentioned in the New Testament is a continuous event, although marked by several epochs, is confirmed by a prophecy recorded in 1 Cor. xv. 24–28, in which the apostle announces the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father, when the Saviour had reigned until he had put all enemies under his feet.

The latter is a truly remarkable prophecy, in several respects. It would appear, upon a careless reading, to denote that the surrender mentioned would occur immediately after the second coming; but this would be inconsistent with the long continuance of the Christian dispensation, over which the Saviour would preside. Taken in its natural meaning, indeed, this prophecy contradicts other parts of the Scriptures in two respects; for the kingdom of God set up by the Redeemer was to be perpetual in the world, and the Saviour was to be its perpetual king.* It seems to denote, also, that natural death would cease after the second coming of Christ.

We may be convinced by this passage, as we must have been all along, that prophetic allegory goes to the very verge of consistency, and excites its extraordinary interest by almost bewildering the mind in its cloud of symbols. Here is an "end," when it is said that "no end" would come; and the Saviour seems to deliver up what he was always to possess. It is evident that some remarkable truth must be conveyed under this startling paradox.

If we knew what "end" was intended by the apostle, we should immediately possess the key of the allegory; but we may more satisfactorily search for the meaning elsewhere. "Delivering up" might strike one as an ambiguous expression, but it cannot furnish any clue in itself. We must look for the key of the prophecy in the idea of "reigning." A little attention will show that the reigning is defined in its character, which is, *to put down enemies*. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (v. 25.) And it is said, "Then cometh the end, *when* he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even

* Luke i. 33 ; Dan. ii. 44 ; vii. 14, 27.

the Father; *when* * he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power." (v. 24.) The end, therefore, is the final victory over all enemies. From the absolute manner in which this victory is spoken of, and from the extent of the Saviour's reigning, — over all his foes, — we cannot doubt, with what we have already seen respecting the prophecies of the judgment, that the reigning meant is equivalent to the judgment of the Christian age, which is spoken of as having the same extent. "The end" is, therefore, the termination of that long and general period of the world, extending from the fall of man to the complete regeneration of mankind: in short, it terminates the dominion of evil. (Rev. x. 7.) The Saviour's kingdom was to be perpetual only as related to his people, or the church. Reigning, also, is a very fit idea by which to denote the Saviour's dominion over enemies; for royalties have been rendered needful or expedient more by the depravity of mankind than by anything belonging to the weakness of human nature. The Saviour himself, in his address to the church of Thyatira, tells us what is meant by reigning over enemies; and he also preserves the consistency of Daniel's prophecy, as well as of several in the New Testament, in the fact that judgment was to be exercised by the saints. He says (Rev. ii. 26, 27) that to him that overcomes he will give "power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: *even as I received of my Father.*" It has been the effect, undoubtedly, of the prayers and the faith of the church, to dash the enemies of Christ as a potter's vessel.

"Delivering up" the kingdom to the Father, therefore,

* It will be perceived that there is a double apodosis introduced by the adverb "when," and one of which is explanatory of the other.

must be taken in the sense of completing the purpose for which it was designed; or it may denote, and must imply, giving the wicked over to punishment. The latter meaning appears preferable, since the original denotes a commitment of criminals for trial or for punishment.

At the period denoted all opposition to the everlasting kingdom of God will cease. The long reign of death over mankind will cease. In what sense, however, this latter victory will be attained, must be reserved to another chapter. By this course of explanation, however, this remarkable prophecy becomes a regular and unbroken part of the chapter in which it is contained.

What is meant by the declaration in this remarkable prophecy, whose enigma has thus been generally explained, that the Son also himself shall be subject to the Father, is not very intelligible. There appears to be an intentional designation of God as the Father. That the Saviour will return to a private station, is preposterous; and that he places himself at present in opposition to the Father, according to the regular Gnostic doctrine, is not less so. But that the conception of some independence which will no longer exist is conveyed, we must understand, in order to give the declaration any meaning. The case, however, is still far in the future; and we may resign the explanation, perhaps, like the event itself, to some future times.

It may further be observed upon this whole prophecy that it is probably only an allegorical expansion of Psalms cx. 1, — "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." It is undeniable that the prophecies of the New Testament frequently derive their facts, or at least their imagery, from the Old Testament.*

* Dr. Mills, of Auburn, has offered some valuable observations upon this prophecy, in the *Biblical Repository*, in one of its earlier volumes.

This particular prophecy, however, ought not to be concluded without noticing the light which it casts upon the design of this work, and which is of a very unexpected and interesting nature. The Saviour's victory is represented as absolute. He puts down *all* rule, *all* authority and power, puts *all* enemies under his feet, and destroys the last enemy of all — death. There cannot be any doubt that fallen angels or devils are included in this victory. They are the Saviour's principal enemies. They have the power of death, and reign in the hearts of the children of disobedience. This being the case, there are no enemies in the creation whom the Saviour does not subdue. But, although the Saviour's mediatorial dominion is universal, his reigning seems manifestly to be confined to the earth. Nor can we doubt that, as good angels have their offices principally here, so devils — who are called powers of the air, as though they resided in it — discharge their evil offices here also. We have the extraordinary truth, therefore, *that the enemies of God in the entire system of nature are to be subdued upon the earth.* The world is, therefore, exalted to a place of importance corresponding with the magnitude of its events. The Saviour did not come upon an unintelligible errand, nor with forces out of proportion to the work to be done. Evil will be shorn of its powers of mischief upon the earth, which is hung as a point among so many stars.

It would appear that there could remain no doubt upon the mind, from the evidence now collected, that the judgment mentioned as to take place at the Saviour's second coming *began* when the necessity of the case shows that the Saviour must have come, that is, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Then the Jewish nation was terribly judged and condemned; and their judgment is proceeding now. A

judgment of the Gentiles might be regarded as commencing at the same time. But before we proceed any further we will notice some passages which require a brief explanation ; and it will be proper, also, before we conclude, to set the doctrine of the judgment, as we shall find it to be scripturally presented, in its just place of importance, as a great and practical religious truth.

It is well known that the word "day" is used in the New Testament in denoting the judgment. We read of "that day," "the last day," "the day of judgment," and "the day of the Lord." We have seen, however, by citations before given, that when the apostles speak of this "day" they mean the second coming of Christ, which was to be at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the resurrection and the judgment were both to take place. It is unnecessary to repeat this evidence. Happily, therefore, no critical or historical explanation is necessary of the meaning or use of the word "day," and of the expression "last day," as applied to the judgment. It is sufficient that we know their general meaning to be the period which related to the second advent of the Saviour, whether long or short, one day or a thousand years or more. The word day is well known to be used with an indefinite meaning in the Scriptures.

Yet the expression "last day," as relating to the second coming, has been regarded as denoting the termination of human affairs upon this earth. But, as we have seen, the expression will not bear this meaning.*

* If the reader will take the trouble to compare the following passages, he will perceive that the expression "last day," or something similar, denotes in the Scriptures a future time, and is more particularly used to express the coming of the Messiah or Christ, and relates to the time preceding his advent. Some of these passages may be explained upon the principle that the coming of Christ was associated both with blessings and

Such expressions as "judgment-seat," "appearing" or "standing before the judgment-seat," "sounding a trumpet," and the like, may obviously be taken as figurative expressions, and offer nothing inconsistent with the Saviour's coming in the generation in which he spoke. As we have seen, the second coming was conceived in the highest style of prophetic allegory. God is said, in the familiar style of the Bible, to assemble the world before him upon various occasions, or whenever he decides upon the conduct of a nation or of men in general. (Ps. l. 1; Is. xxxiv. 1-5; i. 2; xlv. 20, etc.)

Several particular passages may also be easily explained. The Saviour said, upon one occasion, "*Now* is the judgment of this world; *now* shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John xii. 31, 32.)

This is a very important, and in no way difficult passage. It is obvious that the world could not literally come to an end when the event intended by the Saviour should take place; for all men were subsequently to be drawn to him, and this, indeed, has never happened hitherto. The expression "this world" must, therefore, be taken in some limited sense; and it is unnecessary to show that it is equivalent to "this age," or "the Jewish age." Literally, or according to the usage in the New Testament, it means "this mankind," or the Jewish people.* "The world to

judgments. It never denotes the termination of human history upon the earth. Some authors, as Hammond, Owen, Prideaux, and Lightfoot, take the expression "day of the Lord," in 2 Peter iii. 10, which is equivalent to "last day," as denoting merely the punishment of the Jewish people. (Is. ii. 2; Mic. iv. 1; Gen. xlix. 1; Jer. xlviii. 47; Mal. iii. 1, etc.; Deut. xxxi. 29; Acts ii. 17; Joel ii. 28, etc.; Heb. i. 2; James v. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Peter iii. 3.)

* See Wahl's Lexicon, or any critical commentary.

come” is a counterpart to this expression, and denotes the Christian dispensation, which was *to follow* the Jewish. (Compare Matt. xii. 32; Gal. i. 4; Eph. i. 21; Heb. ii. 5; vi. 5.)* The Saviour, then, means, “now” or soon shall be the judgment of this world, or of the Jewish people. And this judgment soon began its terrible accomplishment. Satan also would soon be cast out — that is, of the Jewish world. There is great significance in this latter declaration. It does not mean that he would enter into no other people, for predictions to the contrary are very plainly recorded. But he would no longer be permitted to use the Jewish people as the great instrument of his purpose. He would go to the Gentiles, and enter into the Christian church, and lay the foundation for new delusions among mankind.

The Saviour also says, “For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” (John ix. 39.) This is applicable to the character of the unbelieving Jews, who thought they saw, and to the Saviour’s treatment of this people, whose condemnation he assured.

In another passage, the Saviour says, “If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (John xii. 47, 48.) The Saviour here quite consistently declares what his *purpose* was in coming to the world — it was to save it. Judgment or condemnation was, therefore, incidental. But the pas-

* “World to come” and “forever” are equivalent. (Mark iii. 29.) But the Christian dispensation was to last forever. See Doddridge on Matt. xii. 32.

sage explains itself, and is very important in exhibiting to us the nature of the judgment. The Saviour disavowed any purpose of judging the world *in person* ; and, in fact, he did not personally come, and never will. But he established and left a power of judgment in the world, and a judgment-seat. His word, his people, and the providence of God, will declare and execute all the purposes of judgment which he intended.

He says, in this passage, that the word which he has spoken will judge those who reject him. Both, also, in the Old and the New Testaments, the saints are represented as judging the world. The Saviour gave his disciples power to bind and unloose, to open and to shut, the kingdom of God. Numerous passages may be consulted upon this subject. (Dan. vii. 22, 27 ; Matt. xix. 28 ; 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3 ; xi. 31, 32 ; Rev. xx. 4 ; Matt. xvi. 19 ; John xx. 21-23.) Before, however, commenting upon this interesting subject, and turning the doctrine of the judgment to its practical and solemn account, we will consider some passages which might have a tendency to confuse the mind, and whose explanation depends upon the meaning to be attached to the expression "kingdom of God," "kingdom of heaven," or the like.

These expressions are sometimes regarded as meaning the Christian dispensation upon earth ; and at other times, heaven, or the residence of the saints after death. It is not proposed to enter upon a critical explanation of this language. It is universally believed that this way of speaking is derived from Daniel ii. 44. And that the idea, as there expressed, denotes the perpetual kingdom of God upon earth, cannot be doubted. The primary import of the language is, therefore, the Christian age ; and this will be found to be its use in the New Testament, as

denoting the perpetual kingdom of the Redeemer, which would commence and be perfected upon the earth, after the Saviour's coming; which, as we have seen, was at the destruction of Jerusalem. No intelligent reader will need any particular defence of this position. "Eternal life" is an expression which properly denotes the blessings which belong to another state of being; while "kingdom of heaven" never has a meaning which includes, except by implication, anything more than the blessings of the Christian faith enjoyed in this world. The developments of this chapter must necessarily limit this latter expression in this manner; for, as we have seen, the everlasting nature of Christ's kingdom is to be explained by its perpetuity on earth. Eternal life is a blessing of this dispensation; it grows out of the Saviour's kingdom in the world, and is the great promise of the New Testament. It is a blessing conferred upon those who are admitted to this earthly kingdom, or who are its believing or faithful subjects. If there are, as some suppose, actual allusions in the expression "kingdom of heaven" to the condition of saints beyond this world, the primary import is not changed in this way. Besides, it is well known that the kingdom of heaven is represented in the Scriptures as containing sinners, and much evil, even up to the brightest periods of its glory. (Dan. vii. 9-12; Rev. xxii. 15; Matt. xiii. 24, &c.) One or two of the most important passages relating to this subject, as presenting any difficulty, may be more particularly considered.

Paul says, in 1 Cor. xv. 50, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." If the apostle meant that men in the present bodily state could not enter the kingdom of God, then the idea must be abandoned that "kingdom of heaven" and kin-

dred expressions are used only to denote the kingdom of Christ upon earth. But this is a much graver case than the settlement of the question whether "kingdom of God" and eternal life are ever identical expressions, although their respective ideas may be expressed in close connection; since the apostle was all along speaking of the kingdom of God which was soon to be; and if he says that men with flesh and blood could not enter it, which they soon did, after the destruction of Jerusalem, — that is to say, all the church which survived that event, — then there is no consistency in his language, and we cannot reconcile his statements with one another. But he does not say so. He says that flesh and blood could not *inherit* the kingdom of God. "Flesh and blood" has not necessarily the same meaning as "men;" nor is "inheriting" the same thing as "entering." His meaning is sufficiently explained, if we suppose him to have meant the same as John, when he said, "which were born, not of *blood*, nor of the will of the *flesh*, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.) The meaning is nothing more remarkable than another declaration of the apostle, which, indeed, is the same thing, "that they that are *in the flesh* cannot *please* God." (Rom. viii. 8.) No one ever took the apostle here to mean that no Christian, while in the body, can please God. "Flesh and blood," therefore, must have some tropical meaning. Nor is it difficult to discover what it is. The kingdom of heaven is not acquired through anything belonging to the unrenewed or the fleshly condition of man, which is opposed in its nature or spirit to it. This was a very proper illustration of the apostle's course of thought; though it is very abruptly introduced, and we may reverently expect by design, on the part of the inspiring Spirit, to deepen the allegory. In the actual state of the resur-

rection, or after the saints have been changed in body, they will, the apostle urges, bear the Saviour's image, as in the present life all bear the image of Adam. This is indeed consistent, he says; for nothing that belongs to the kingdom of God, or that comes to us through it, as the resurrection to life does, is an inheritance of the flesh. Adam's children, as such, have no claims to the kingdom of God, and no inheritance in it. They inherit sin and misery and death from him. They must be born again, as the children of the Redeemer, before they can have any title to inherit the blessings of his kingdom. This is in fact the reasoning of the apostle. More light, however, will be incidentally cast upon this subject in the succeeding chapters.

The Saviour, in another passage, told the disciples that he would not drink again of the fruit of the vine with them until he drank it new with them in his Father's kingdom. (Matt. xxvi. 29.) This passage presents simply the difficulty, whether the Saviour is to be understood as speaking literally or tropically. If he spoke literally, it happens to be recorded that he both ate and drank with his disciples after his resurrection; and not many days afterwards the disciples were accused of being drunk with *new* wine. (Acts x. 41; Acts ii. 13.) The kingdom of God, which was said to be among the Jews while the Saviour was living, may be construed in such a sense as to admit of the literal explanation. But another, a tropical, and very affecting explanation, is possible, and may by some be deemed still more probable. It is not necessary to take the Saviour literally at all. Upon those interesting occasions when the disciples would celebrate their Redeemer's love, he would be present with them, and they might deem him as near, or as interested, as if he were bodily present with them. And upon those occasions in the Christian age,

the wine which they drank with new joys might be called in this sense new.

One other passage only, which is presented, either by accident or design, in the character of an enigma, will engage our attention. Some of the Sadducees, who denied any future state, inquired of the Saviour how it would be in the resurrection, or, what is the same thing, in the kingdom of heaven, with a woman who had seven husbands; whose wife she would be of the seven. The Saviour very significantly replied, that they erred, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. xxii. 29); and then added, as recorded by one evangelist, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." (Luke xx. 35, 36.) It is quite indifferent whether the Sadducees understood this answer altogether or not; undoubtedly they did not, for the disciples did not. The answer was sufficient to silence those who questioned the doctrine of a future state; but it presents an enigmatical character to us. The Saviour seems to say that when he should come, at which time the dead would be raised, there would be no more marriage nor death. But this is not the case. Nor does the Saviour say that it would be. An emphasis upon one word will change the whole meaning. He said that those who were accounted worthy to attain that world *and* the resurrection would not marry nor die. Mark assists this explanation by saying, "When they shall *rise from the dead*, they neither marry," &c. (Mark xii. 25.) The Saviour evidently distinguishes between his kingdom, or "that world," and the actual resurrection of individual believers. The

doctrine of the resurrection, however, will more particularly occupy our attention hereafter.

It is evident, then, that all that remarkable system of prophecies relating to the second coming of Christ is made to harmonize, by bringing together the different parts, and contemplating them with each other's aid. Wonderful, indeed, is that perfection of allegory by which the same truth is carried through so great a conflict of images, and is often seemingly lost, under apparently very opposite representations. That it was quite possible to misconceive the meaning of these prophecies, is quite obvious. Nor can it be doubted that the Christian world has long been in error upon the subject, and has interpreted prophecy too much like an ordinary narrative.

Many good and conscientious men will undoubtedly be led to fear, however, that the change of conceptions upon the subject of the judgment, which these explanations render it necessary to make, may have a bad effect upon the cause of religion. But this change is, after all, much less than would at first appear, and the beneficial effect is heightened.

The subject does not at all affect the final condemnation of the wicked. None but the truly pious can ever be expected to enter heaven. Nor is it true that there is not a future judgment to happen, of a general character. Such an event is predicted in the Revelations, and under conceptions of the most impressive nature. It will not indeed be of such a kind that the dead will be literally assembled together upon the earth. But a judgment will be passed in some way upon *all* mankind; and some signal catastrophe, whose character we cannot now, at this distance of time, fully determine, will overwhelm a cause which will

raise very formidable obstacles to the progress of genuine religion.

In estimating, also, the effect produced upon the world at present by the doctrine of the judgment and the condemnation of the wicked, we can hardly doubt whether the influence of the belief that men when they die go to a final and irrevocable condition is greater than that of the belief of a distant and very distant judgment, the time of which has been receding to a greater distance, and its purpose falling into deeper obscurity, from age to age, and as a knowledge of the Scriptures has increased. Every faithful and intelligent pastor, however unshaken his confidence in a general judgment, according to the ordinary acceptation, may have been, insists much more upon the final and hopeless issue of the condition of the wicked at their death, than upon a future and distant judgment. The author would be grieved, indeed, although dealing with very certain conclusions, to think that he had given the sinner the slightest cause to persevere in impenitence or wickedness, or that he had taken from the hand of any faithful pastor the power to arrest the sinner in his career of blindness and death. It is believed that a new power has been produced from the Bible, rather than anything abstracted from it. Let us see how this case stands in the Scriptures.

We cannot doubt, from the evidence to which we have attended, that the real power of the judgment is the word of God, attended with divine influences; nor that the people of God, as believing and teaching and exemplifying the Scriptures, are the real judges, and that the world is assembled before their tribunal; nor that the judgments of the church, when proceeding by the word of God, are enforced, in the providence of God, upon nations and upon individual sinners, especially in their final ruin.

These are certainly not truths which contain anything trivial, or likely to be disregarded when once believed. And it is easy, also, to see what effect such a doctrine must have upon the church, and what excellence of character and knowledge of the truth it must exact of them. A mere exhibition of the terrors of condemnation will not answer the purpose; men must be made to see and to feel that sin is an evil, and that the blessings of the Gospel, in their effects upon the heart and life, are of a transcendent nature.

It cannot be doubted by any one that the church, with all its forces of the Word, of righteousness, and of the Spirit, actually exerts a judging power. Men could not be more effectually pronounced to be unfit for the kingdom of heaven than is done by these means every day. It is impossible that the Scriptures should be preached, or even known, without judging men. Every man knows in his own heart whether he is a friend or an enemy of Christ; but, whatever he may think of himself, his life, determined as to its character by the Word, is known to God, who will finally issue the case at death. It is not meant that the church decides with infallible accuracy who are and who are not fit for the kingdom of God, although this is sometimes the case; but it severs men, in effect, from one another; it separates the wicked from among the just, and presents, as it were, to the mind of God, the real character of the world.

Still, the judgment, proceeding upon these principles, is sometimes depicted to the mind in an allegorical manner in the Scriptures, and with a sublimity corresponding with the magnitude of the subject. In the prophetic oblivion of time, the judgment collects upon two great periods — the overthrow of the Hebrew nation, and the destruction of the

Gentile semi-religions. And it is important that a coming judgment should be kept before the attention of men; for in all past ages a judgment has been still to come. It is important to know that the past will come up in terrible review before an enlightened world; that the actions of men will receive from men themselves the just measure of their reward. It is important to know that all false religions will be condemned; that every hateful superstition and assumption of authority will be shown in its true character; that nothing that men have pursued or valued will escape the scrutinizing judgment of future times. Many a wicked man and action will be called forth from obscurity and judged, though the man may have long turned to dust in the grave; and this will be an awaking, in the meaning of symbolical prophecy, to shame and everlasting contempt.

But it is important that the existence of a personal, present judgment should be clearly perceived. And such a judgment is going on. The judgments of the Jewish and Christian age mingle together, and extend over the Christian dispensation, from its commencement to the time of the complete victory of Christ. Far more powerful is the idea of a present judgment, virtually armed with all the powers of condemnation, than the conception of a distant one, conceived in a form which the intelligent mind must often penetrate as an allegory, or, unhappily, regard as an absurdity. It must operate as a powerful restraint and incentive to men, to know that their future and final condition is mapped out in the conduct of every day. The hope of future repentance is strong in the human breast; procrastination supports itself in the delusion of future amendment; but this delusion must be enfeebled, when the terrors of condemnation bring their silent but powerful influence with every hour. It is an impressive fact to know that the

messengers have *already gone forth*, and are gathering together the elect ; and that resistance to the real messengers, or rather the messages, of the Gospel, affords the most indubitable evidence of a state of condemnation, and of being placed upon the left hand of the judge. It is a terrible fact that the wicked are every day bound hand and foot, and cast into hell. By every act of wilful sin, the leopard is contracting his indelible and distinguishing spots, and the Ethiop acquiring his characteristic and ineradicable hue. It is impossible to affirm that such a doctrine weakens the force of evangelical religion. If so, it must do it in the Christian pulpits of the world every Sabbath.

This doctrine, in short, imparts to the cause of religion a very powerful aid. It invests the Gospel with a very great and intelligible power. Nor is the assistance which it renders untimely. The spirit of Christianity is exhibiting at present an observable and two-fold tendency to decline ; a tendency, indeed, which has always more or less acted, but which, if unresisted, may throw the church into the arms of another apostasy. There is too strong a desire to produce an unchallenged respect for mere doctrines ; and this must ever be associated with a diminished sense of the importance of practical religion, and must cast the disposition upon an outward observance of the precepts of religion. But, worst of all, and as a natural result, there is a manifest increase of the sectarian spirit. Never were the differences of Christian denominations of less account than now ; but the spirit of denomination manifests itself with a very remarkable earnestness. Several of the most important religious denominations exhibit, in their annual and semi-annual assemblages, a temper which should excite surprise in a Christian breast. It is to be hoped that this manifestation is transient ; but it is real, and too earnest. It may be

resisted by arraying the tribunal of Christ, and by showing, in the light of Christian truth, how hateful is a spirit which produces and widens the separation of brethren, and which breaks down the great precept of Christianity which the Saviour so earnestly enjoined, and which, by doing this, is in fact a far greater departure from the Christian faith than anything which is called doctrinal heresy can possibly be, while the prime doctrinal article of faith in Christ is still maintained. Sectarianism magnifies points of difference, and is an inventor of evil things. It lurks in sophisms, in pleas of expediency, and loves to invest itself with the gray mantle of antiquity. In proportion as we feel and cherish the spirit of Christ, and cultivate a dependence upon the word and spirit of God, this hateful character will diminish and die in our breasts.

It will be perceived, from this discussion, that all have erred, in common with our brethren of the Adventists, in conceiving of the judgment as a single and a distant event. The Adventists, it appears, also, have been right, and all the rest of the world wrong, as regards what they call the pre-millennial advent of Christ; for the judgment was to occur before the regeneration of the world. It is remarkable in how fragmentary a form this subject has been received by the church. It must be contemplated, also, as an interesting fact, that the explanation of this subject by the only key which unlocks it — the Saviour's discourse — should result in showing that all are right, as the conversion of the world is a great truth also, and that all can unite in a harmonious opinion. The author deems it one of his greatest causes of thankfulness to the Father of mercies, that a union of so many minds — which might have been regarded as impossible — may be effected by a less fragmentary view of the subject.

Once more, — while the conversion of the world is not an illusory subject, it may even now be seen, before contemplating the subject of the next chapter, that it needs to be raised to a point of higher importance in the opinion and feeling of the church. Instead of occupying a brief period, or continuing for a few centuries, the condition of the world as regenerated will last forever; for so the dominion of Christ in the world has been predicted in the Scriptures.

This is a stupendous expectation to fill the minds of the church, and to excite its fidelity and zeal. How paltry are the concerns of cabinets and governments, compared with those which interest Christians! Christians, while acting in their capacity as such, are the true laborers of the age, and are producing the brightest materials of future history. With an expenditure of money so insignificant, compared with the sums lavished upon armies and navies, and with the cost of regal establishments, the world is attaining its regeneration, to which its present advancements are but as a shadow. May all Christians raise the confidence of their expectations, and exalt the dignity of their calling, and devote their strength and their affections to the promotion of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ! The cause of Christ will grow stronger and stronger, while all earthly powers will grow weaker and weaker; for the stone cut out of the mountain without hands will increase and *fill the earth*.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RESURRECTION.

The Subject partakes of the Character of a Tradition and of a Revelation. — Interesting and Instructive Nature of the Traditionary Part, and its Source. — Wrong Modes of accounting for this Tradition. — Light cast by the Scriptures upon it. — Unity of the Human Race. — Osiris. — Hades ; its Origin, and Association with this Subject. — The Primitive Faith of Mankind simple, but involved a Belief in the Physical Renovation of Good Men. — The Belief of a Resurrection as Ancient as the World. — How only the Possibility of such an Event is involved in any Difficulty. — This Difficulty not involved in the Scriptural Doctrine. — The Resurrection a Continuous Event. — When the Age of the Resurrection began. — Nothing opposes the Declaration that the Earth abideth Forever. — The Prepossession examined that the Scriptures are not Consonant with this Explanation of the Resurrection. — The Subject considered under Two Questions. — What is taught respecting the Nature of the New Body. — Its Materiality. — Errors of Mr. Bush. — The word Spiritual as applied to the New Body. — Notice of the Question whether the New Body will be Respirative. — Manner of the Resurrection. — The Scriptures of the Old Testament do not teach the Restoration of the same Identical Body. — Job. — Examination of the New Testament. — Bishop Horsley. — Paul's Image of the Seed. — A Curious Question in regard to a Germ of the Body. — "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." — "In the clouds." — "In the air." — "Caught up together with them." — The Veil withdrawn by the Apostle from his Imagery. — Rev. xx. — Second Death. — Place of the Resurrection. — John v. 25-29. — Christ's Descent into Hades. — Heb. ix. 27. — Death the Original Penalty, to which Judgment has been added under the Christian Age. — The Result.

It will now be necessary to consider the subject of the resurrection, before it will be possible to decide intelligently

respecting the future condition of mankind. This subject takes a traditionary and a scriptural character.

There is the greatest reason to believe that the restoration of mankind to a bodily state was an article of religious belief in the very earliest times, or in the origin of society. Ethnologists have collected many facts,* and many more may be gathered from the narratives of voyagers and travellers, from which we might alone, and must from scriptural testimony, draw this inference.

From the earliest times, the remains of man have been reverently treated. The provision of food and clothing, of ornaments and weapons of war, for the deceased, would suggest some extraordinary cause, and would most naturally be referred to some religious expectations. Such customs, as is well known, have been almost or quite universal.† When the body has been burned, some animal, as among the Romans and other nations, has been immolated at the funeral pile; and other evidences have existed, among those nations which have practised cremation, of a still more ancient custom; and the primitive unity of the human race may be inferred from their funeral usages and belief.‡

These relics of primitive unity have usually, however, been regarded as having originated in purely natural causes; in an affection for the deceased, and in a natural belief in immortality. It would have been a singular act of mere affection, however, to have provided food and clothing and other articles for a dead body; and as to the immortality of

* See Pritchard's *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*.

† The Travels of Dr. Livingstone have shown the extension of these customs to Southern Africa, — almost the only country of which, in this regard, we wanted information.

‡ See note p. 291.

the soul, it may be more than questioned whether a faith in this article would ever have arisen or extended upon a great scale without a revelation, from the simple fact, if from no other, that the belief is not universal. But a few considerations appear competent to refer these customs to their proper sources.

The Scriptures inform us that, when man fell, a promise was made that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It is a necessary inference that this declaration should have been taken as promising a restoration to a bodily state. The curse visibly fell upon the natural or bodily life. Man became subject to sickness and death, by his fall. In the New Testament, Satan, with manifest reference to the event, is said to have, or to have had, "the power over death;" which Christ is said to have taken away, as regards those who believe, and to have procured "the redemption of our body." "Everlasting life" also, in contradistinction to the death of the Adamic penalty, is represented everywhere as one of the great blessings of the Redeemer's purchase.

There can be no doubt, therefore, in what way the promise was meant to be understood; and the earliest customs and traditions regarding the dead show in what manner it was actually taken, and afford, therefore, very convincing evidence of the unity of the human race.

We have historical evidence that the Egyptians embalmed in expectation of a resurrection.* Ancient mythology furnishes interesting evidence that the promise respecting the seed of the woman had travelled down from the earliest times, and been wrought into various conceptions. One of the most interesting instances of this kind may be found in the Egyptian Osiris. The tradition is

* Herodotus, B. II., § 123.

here complete. This deity was partly human and partly divine; was a deliverer of mankind; and was especially the god and friend of the dead. The hopes of the dying were fixed upon him. Mummies were made in the form assigned to him; and an eye, or a sign of his presence and care, perhaps, was placed over the incision in the side made in the process of embalming. And Sir Gardner Wilkinson assures us that his worship was universal, and originated in the earliest times.* It has long been suggested that the doctrine of Hades, which was so widely diffused, originated from the practice — probably the most ancient — of burying in caves. The paradise of the American Indians is in the air — as that of the oriental world was under the earth — corresponding with their ancient mode of exposing the body upon the surface of the ground. In both these cases, however, it is evident that man was not deemed to be wholly extinct at his death; and the provision of food, and of other articles of necessity and comfort, whether buried in a cave or exposed in the air, shows that some religious belief was associated with the bodily remains.

The subject furnishes us with an affecting view of the primitive condition of mankind. They were not abandoned to a state of nature, but had a religious belief, whose gross remains may be traced among the rudest races of men, and which we may find transmuted in the peculiar and sometimes splendid mythology of antiquity.

With what tender anxiety must the first men have borne their dead to caves, and, perhaps, have afterwards watched them! They seem to have provided them with every means necessary to secure their happiness when the deliverer should come. They expected such a deliverer. They

* Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians. — Osiris was the personified principle antagonistic of evil, or Typho.

were, however, ignorant of the time ; and appear at length to have lost, to some extent, the hope of a literal resurrection in the doctrine of metempsychosis ; in which, however, the scene was only changed. Yet in India the long series of transmigrations was expected to terminate at last in the restoration of human life upon the earth. How strong, therefore, was the operation of some primitive cause upon the human mind, which no experience and no philosophy was ever able to shake ! *

* It would be impossible to treat the interesting subject of the burial customs and notions of mankind, without expanding it at least into another chapter. The author has collected facts upon this subject very surprising in their amount, and as justifying the origin to which they are ascribed. A very interesting history may be discovered in the variations of these customs. The origin of burning the dead is curious, as connected with a belief in the transmigration of the soul. But when the dead were burned, articles of value were burned with them, and very frequently living animals, or even human beings. The classical reader may recollect such things as connected with the Roman funeral pile ; and every one will recollect the horrible *suttee* of India. The care to preserve even the slightest remains of the dead, even when burned, in funeral urns or in other ways, is quite remarkable. Destroying servants, to accompany the dead, has been practised upon an extensive scale, and is carried to the most barbarous extent in Africa. The dead, in short, were regarded as needing what was useful in life. Even the Chinese now burn the images of servants upon funeral occasions. Household gods were probably the deceased ancestors of the family, and probably arose from the practice, still used in the Philippines and in Polynesia, of burying in the house. The connection of Hades with this subject is truly remarkable ; but it was natural to regard the dead who were buried in caves as existing under ground, and those who were exposed upon the surface as existing, like the Indian paradise, in the air. The unity of the human race is a very clear deduction from this subject. For races the most dispersed, and the most unlike, have disposed of their dead in a similar manner ; and where cremation, or burning, was substituted for burial, or exposure, the original or more ancient custom of depositing articles of value still survived. Customs so identical could only have originated, whatever departures may afterwards have occurred, before the dispersion of mankind.

These interesting considerations show that the doctrine of the bodily restoration of man was a primitive belief, and was communicated by revelation. It is not simply a doctrine of the New Testament, though there so explicitly taught. It has been thought hard, however, to reconcile the doctrine of the resurrection with natural science; and it may be thought to be still more difficult to reconcile the event with the second coming of Christ, or with its actual occurrence at the time when this event must have taken place.

As to the reconciliation of the subject with science, the case is difficult only when we conceive that the Scriptures teach the literal recovery or the resurrection of the old body in every respect. And as to the second coming of Christ, — the resurrection must, in order to preserve the truth of the Scriptures, have begun to take place when the Saviour came, soon after his own and the apostles' predictions; and it must have gone on uninterruptedly ever since. The resurrection, like the judgment, is a continuous event. It must, therefore, take place in a manner invisible to us; nor is it necessary to conceive that any portion of the matter of the old body — any ponderable element which composes it — should be used in the composition of the new one.

If this is the true idea of the resurrection, — as it unquestionably is, — the affairs of the world, it is obvious, may continue forever; its probationary system may continue, the human race be born and die as ever, and all the good go immediately, upon the termination of their earthly state, and with a bodily organization, to populate the distant places of the creation. Whether there is anything in the New Testament, or anywhere, inconsistent with such a conception of the resurrection, a few considerations will enable us to decide.

As we have seen, it must be taken as a matter of fact that the resurrection is a continuous event, perpetually and imperceptibly taking place. The first impression of almost every one would be that much exists in the New Testament inconsistent with such a doctrine. It will be found, however, that this impression is wrong, and has been founded, in great part, upon unexamined traditional explanations. But if the impression should prove correct, it would be fatal to the inspiration of the New Testament; for nothing, as we have seen, can be more clearly shown than that the resurrection, like the judgment, was to take place while some were yet living to whom the Saviour spoke.

We shall divide this chapter with the consideration of two questions, — what the Scriptures teach respecting the nature of the new body, and whether they teach anything definitely respecting the manner in which the resurrection would occur.

Upon the subject of the nature of the new body, we may consider, under this head, only one question, — whether the body of the resurrection is of a material substance, like the present body; reserving the question whether any part of the matter of the old body enters into the composition of the new, to the consideration of the manner in which the event is to occur with which it is inseparably connected.

We need eyes to see and ears to hear, or else they would not have been made. We are accustomed to the ministration of the senses, so to speak, between the mind and external nature. We conceive of the body as the seat of the organs of sense. When we are promised, therefore, a restoration to a bodily state, it is unavoidable to conceive of a restoration of the senses, or a restoration to a body like the present in its nature. The Bible would not speak of “the redemption of *our body*” (Rom. viii. 23), nor prove

it by the resurrection of our Saviour, unless the actual recovery of our bodily state were intended. We may take it for granted, therefore, that the new body will be material, and essentially like the present, unless we are particularly informed to the contrary.

It has been alleged by Mr. Bush,* after a very careless criticism by Dr. Dwight, that the Greek word translated resurrection does not relate to the resurrection of the body, but imports simply "an existence beyond the grave, or the immortality of the soul." Were this the real meaning of the word, still, it would suggest the material conception of rising from a recumbent position, for it literally signifies to stand up. But the passage cited by President Dwight is Matt. xxii. 23-32, which will by no means bear the construction which is put upon it. The Sadducees ask whose wife in the resurrection a woman would be who had had seven husbands. This question shows the very opposite of the conclusion derived, and that a material state was intended. It was the same as asking, if there is a future state, and the human race are raised up body and spirit, how will it be with a woman who had seven husbands in this life. It is very perceptible that the Sadducees had in their minds a bodily condition, when they proposed this question. They did not, however, it appears, believe in the existence of mankind after death; and the Saviour proceeded to adduce a powerful evidence that the existence of man did not necessarily cease at his death, by showing that the patriarchs were still in being, and awaiting, no doubt, the resurrection of the dead.

Mr. Bush has also attempted to show that the Saviour did not actually rise from the dead with his crucified body. The case of the Saviour, it may be admitted, is important,

* "Anastasis."

as adduced in the New Testament, in proof of a restoration to a bodily state, and not as showing that the identical body surrendered in death will be raised again. But Mr. Bush denies that the Saviour rose in a material form. Such a declaration, however, is preposterous, in view of several very explicit declarations of the New Testament. It is particularly said (Acts i. 3), "To whom he showed himself *alive*, after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being *seen* of them *forty days*, and *speaking* of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." He said to the disciples, who were frightened, and *supposed* that they had seen a *spirit* (Luke xxiv. 36, etc.), "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold *my hands* and *my feet*, that it is *I myself*: *handle me* and *see*; for a *spirit hath not flesh and blood, as ye see me have*. And when he had thus spoken, he *showed* them his hands and his feet." "And while they believed not for joy," as it is said, he inquired whether they had any *meat*, and *ate* a piece of a fish and of a honey-comb before them. He further informed them why it was necessary that he should die and "rise from the dead the third day." It is said, also, that when the disciples visited the sepulchre, they found the body *gone*, and the linen clothes *only* lying there; and an angel appeared to Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary," and said to them, "He is not here: for he is *risen*, as he said. Come, see the place *where the Lord lay*." (John xx. 3-8; Matt. xxviii. 1-8.)

The evidence upon which Mr. Bush principally relies, in order to destroy the force of these convincing passages, is, that Jesus is said to have entered the room where the disciples were assembled, and when it is expressly related that "the doors were shut." (John xx. 19, 26.) It is because the doors are said to have been shut, that Mr.

Bush supposes that the Saviour could not have entered the room with a material body. But it happens that *the reason* is particularly mentioned why it is stated that the doors were shut; which was, because the disciples were afraid of the Jews! We may conceive, therefore, that the Saviour miraculously caused the bolts to be drawn or the fastenings to yield; and it is much more natural to adopt this explanation than to suppose that he did not enter the room with a body which was dependent upon the ordinary modes of ingress.* The force, therefore, of the declaration that the doors were shut, is not that the Saviour was no longer in the body, but that the disciples were afraid of the Jews; and the mention of the Saviour's entering, notwithstanding the fastenings, shows his miraculous powers, and was an additional evidence of his resurrection. Mr. Bush also relies upon the fact that when Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene she did not know who he was until he addressed her by name, she supposing that he was the gardener; and that he is said to have appeared "in another form" to two of the disciples who were going to Emmaus. (Mark xvi. 9-12, with John xx. 11-18.) Since the Saviour's clothes, however, had been distributed at his crucifixion, he could not have appeared in his usual manner or dress, as we must suppose that he was attired; and he may have intentionally appeared both in a dress and occupied like the gardener. When he addressed the two disciples going into the country, he may simply have taken the character of a traveller both as regards his manner and his attire. This is all that the word translated "form" necessarily imports. (Phil. ii. 6.) Mr. Bush has failed, therefore, in showing that the body of the resurrection is not material.

* See Doddridge on the place.

There is only one passage in the Bible which seems to teach that the new body is not material in substance. Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 44), "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This passage deserves particular attention.

The etymological meaning of the word translated "spirit" in the New Testament, as denoting the agitation of the air by breathing or blowing, obviously allows it, with its derivatives, to be used in a variety of senses. It is actually used to denote the wind, a spirit, a living being, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the words of a discourse. It is only by the connection, therefore, it is obvious, that we can ascertain the meaning of this word. The adjective *spiritual* might also be expected to be used with considerable diversity of meaning. It is used to denote *material things*. Manna eaten by the children of Israel, while in the wilderness, is called spiritual; and the water which they drank is called also spiritual: "And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink." (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.) The present or earthly *bodies* of believers are probably called spiritual, as being the temples of God. (1 Pet. ii. 5, with 1 Cor. vi. 19.) Spiritual, therefore, denotes some relation or character which may belong to a material substance; and does not necessarily denote that a thing is not composed of matter. When the apostle speaks of "a spiritual body," therefore, it does not necessarily import that its substance is not material.

But the reason why the apostle applies this epithet to the new body is very material, and is quite plain. The style of the apostle abounds in illustrative conceptions; and he particularly carries out, in the use of this word, the idea

of the relation which he had previously shown to exist between Adam and Christ. "By man," he says, "came death," and "by man" also "came the resurrection of the dead." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." He resumes the idea of this relation, when further on he endeavors to denote, still by illustrative conceptions, the new body. There is a body, he says, sown in dishonor; for he speaks in this impersonal manner. There is also a body raised in glory. There is sown a natural body. There is raised a spiritual body. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." "For so," he tells us, "it is written: The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam *a quickening spirit*. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." Here it must be plain to every one that a reason is assigned for calling the present body natural and the new body spiritual; but what the reason is, may not to the mere English reader appear very obvious, with our translation. It is plain, however, that the new body is called spiritual, because Christ is a quickening or life-giving *spirit*; and the character of "natural," as applied to the present body, must be taken from the fact that Adam is called "a living soul." A reference to the original, and to the account of the creation, will show, in a moment, how the word rendered natural, which means literally breathing or respirative, is derived from the expression "living soul." In the account in Genesis, it is said that Adam was made a living soul, or literally a living breath. The Greek word rendered natural refers to this, since it literally signifies breathing. Nor can we doubt why Christ is called a quickening spirit. In the same account of the creation, Paul found it mentioned that the

creation arose out of disorder, and sprung into life when the spirit of God, or the life-giving spirit, moved upon the waters. He found in the narrative an image of weakness and of dependence, and an image of creative power; and he applied them respectively to Adam and to Christ as strikingly denoting the present and the new body. The one is mortal, the other is immortal. Such a comparison, it is obvious, cannot warrant the inference that the new body is immaterial. Paul is not speaking of the substance, but of its nature in general. The only reason for believing that the new body is not material would be, that the body of Christ is not composed of matter. But we have no reason whatever for such an inference in regard to his glorified state.

A curious question has been proposed, from this comparison, whether the new body will be supported by respiration, and, in short, organized at all like the present. Mr. Barnes appears to have drawn the inference from the word rendered "natural" that it will not be. Sir Charles Bell has, however, very strikingly shown how dependent our whole anatomical structure is upon the organs of respiration.* The use of food and respiration, and, indeed, the arrangement of external nature, — since man was intended to live by them, — are inseparably connected together. We cannot, therefore, conceive what the organization of man will be without respirative or digestive organs, and without the muscular and anatomical structure dependent

* The respiratory part of our nervous system is an essential part of our organization, and may be considered the basis of that character which we have arising from the possession of a thorax and of a bony skeleton in general. There would be no need of a thorax to contain and assist the soft organs of respiration, if we did not respire; nor would organs of locomotion be physically as important as now. Our whole physical character seems to be highly dependent upon the respiratory function.

upon them. And if the worlds which are to constitute the future home of all the redeemed produce nothing for their subsistence, if there are no vegetable productions, and if there is no atmosphere and no diffusion of light in them, this world and its inhabitants stand alone in the creation, and it is perfectly inconceivable upon what plan the worlds and man himself are to be constituted. All the types and archetypes of this world can point out nothing as to any other. But when we look up into the sky, external nature does appear to present some striking resemblances in common. And we are taught that our bodily nature, with some differences, will be reproduced. We are taught that there will be no distinction of sexes in another state. We are taught that the new body will be immortal, and not subject to corruption. But we are not taught that it will not be nourished by food, whatever may be the case. The word "natural" is manifestly a mere illustrative epithet, and no more conveys the idea that the new body will not be supported by respiration, because Adam's was, than that it will not be material, or that it will be purely spiritual, because the spirit which moved upon the waters had no connection with matter. When the apostle says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, he means, as we have already seen, that our natural character does not procure us admission to the kingdom of God, or qualify us for it. He tells us that Christians are not now in the flesh, but in the Spirit; * where no one would take him to mean that Christians have lost their flesh and blood, and have already acquired spiritual or immaterial bodies.

What intelligible idea, also, could be conveyed by the expression "*spiritual body*," taken in the construction required in the opposite opinion. it is hard to conceive.

* Rom. viii. 9.

The words body and spirit present very different and incompatible conceptions. An identity of such conceptions is impossible. A thing cannot be in the same sense at once spirit and body. To speak, therefore, of a spiritual body in the sense contended for, is nothing less than absurd.

There can be no question, therefore, that the new body will consist of matter. We are entitled to infer nothing different from any declarations of the Scriptures, but the contrary. We will, therefore, turn to the second point of attention.

Upon the Manner of the resurrection the Scriptures have been thought to say much. We have conceived them to teach that the old body will be literally raised again from the grave. Whether they do teach this, and whether any of the materials of the old body enter into the composition of the new one, will now become a particular subject of consideration.*

Although a deliverance from the power of death was promised at the fall, there is no evidence in the Scriptures of the Old Testament that it was believed by the pious of the Jewish age that the actual body resigned in death would be literally raised again.* That the Jews believed in the restoration of mankind, or of the pious, to a bodily form, is nevertheless well known, however silent their Scriptures may generally be upon the subject. The restoration of the body to life is undoubtedly mentioned in the Scriptures as having occurred; but this, it is obvious, is very different from the recovery of a body which had long, to all appearance, entirely perished.

Instead of teaching that the body which dies will be recovered again, the Scriptures of the former dispensation

* We have seen that the expectation was different in the patriarchal or primitive age.

appear to teach the contrary. They speak of the grave as a place of destruction, where the tongue is silent, where no work is done, and from whence man returns no more.* But the most remarkable passage relating to this subject is found in the book of Job (xiv. 7-12). In the interesting passage denoted, Job laments that there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again. Although the root grows old in the earth, and the stock dies in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs, like a plant. But no such hope, he says, can be entertained of man when he dies. His language upon this point is explicit. "But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Job lived in a country where the river-beds, which in the Hebrew language were called "seas," were frequently dried up, leaving a perfectly dry and sandy bottom, or wady. The disappearance of man from the earth was utter and complete, like the floods which had filled the dry channels. His declaration that man would not rise till the heavens were no more might seem to imply that upon such an event he would rise again. If the declaration is prophetic, it may be taken as denoting a future recovery of man; but if it is to be taken in its plain sense, the meaning is quite different. The duration of the heavens is equivalent to eternity. (Ps. lxxxix. 36, 37; compare Eccl. i. 4.) The meaning must, therefore, be that the body will never rise; for the literal heavens will never "be no more."

It has been thought that Job refers to the resurrection,

* Ps. vi.* 5; xlix. 10; lxxxviii. 10, 11; Job vii. 9; Eccl. ix. 10.

and to that of the literal body, when he says, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (xix. 25, 26.) The words "worms" and "body," which chiefly produce the impression, perhaps, that he speaks of the resurrection, are not in the original, and have been supplied by our translators, in accordance with their understanding of the passage. The passage has never been satisfactorily rendered; but little more seems to be necessary, in deciding upon its reference to the resurrection, than to consider the condition of the complainant. Afflicted with a disease which corrupted his skin, lying upon the ground in weakness and distress, and having lost his children and property, but confident in the declaration which he had made that God would deliver him, he might say, "I know that I have a Redeemer (vindicator or helper), and that I shall stand again upon the earth, recovered from this disease; and though my skin be consumed, yet I shall not die, but see God become my helper in the flesh." That this is substantially his meaning, is the belief of the ablest critics. The passage has been ably handled by Mr. Barnes, to whose criticism the reader is referred. As to its teaching the resurrection of the dead in any way, it is certain that it does not; and this is agreed to by Grotius and Rosenmuller, as well as by Mr. Barnes, and by other eminent critics.

A few other passages have sometimes been cited, from the Old Testament, as proving the resurrection. But the general belief is that this doctrine is not taught in that part of the Scriptures, and is certainly not made out so far as the passages usually referred to go. If the reader has

any desire to consult these places, he may refer to them and to those works in which they are treated.*

Some passages in the New Testament will require more particular attention. It will be necessary now to bear in mind all that has been previously established. We have shown that the resurrection, as well as the judgment, was to take place when Christ came in the generation to which he addressed his prediction; and it has also been shown that this prediction was uttered in highly figurative language. It might be expected, therefore, that the resurrection — the subject being prophetical when the apostles spoke of it — would be treated in a similar manner. Indeed, we read of it under all the images in which the second coming was denoted: the dead in Christ are said to come with him, and to be brought by him; a trumpet is said to sound, and the living saints are caught up into the clouds. These images would appear to be incompatible with the fact that the resurrection began upon the complete abrogation of the Jewish institutions, and that it has gone on in an unseen manner — “in a twinkling of an eye” — ever since. The apparent references to a resurrection out of the grave, which every reader will believe to be found in the New Testament, may be thought to embarrass the subject still more. Our way, it is obvious, cannot be clear until these difficulties are removed. We might, indeed, rest the case upon the fact that the Scriptures, to be consistent, must be capable of being explained upon the principle that the prophecies of Christ were strictly true. But we are unwilling to leave a doubt upon the reader's mind; and the explanation of the few passages which it will be necessary

* Ps. xvi. 10; Dan. xii. 2; Hosea xiii. 14; Isaiah xxv. 7, 8; xxvi. 19; Ez. xxxvii. 1-14. See the works of Mr. Barnes, and the *Anastasis* of Mr. Bush.

to consider will not be found to involve any particular difficulty.

It should be, however, in the first place observed, that the resurrection of *the body* is never spoken of in the New Testament. Mr. Locke has observed that this expression is never used, but instead of it "the resurrection of the dead," or from among the dead, is the language employed; and it is also true that the *idea* of the *body* being raised out of the grave is never expressed in the New Testament. The saints and the dead are said to be raised; but, as Mr. Locke has observed, the word "body," and it is also true that anything equivalent to it, is never made the nominative case to any verb, nor is it the object of any verb which imports rising or coming, or anything of the kind.*

* The opinions of Mr. Locke, the celebrated author of the "Essay on the Human Understanding," upon this subject, have long been known to theologians; and it is surprising that the facts which he stated — so easily susceptible of proof or refutation — should not have been more carefully considered. The reader will find his controversy with Stillingfleet referred to by Mr. Bush.

It would appear, from the Sermons of Bishop Horsley (Horsley's Sermons, Vol. I., New York edition), that this prelate — distinguished as the editor of the works of Sir Isaac Newton — exerted his acuteness of mind to meet the particular difficulty of the apparent prediction of the resurrection as an event to occur in the generation in which the Saviour's prophecy was delivered. Bishop Horsley admits that some in the apostolic age "looked for the resurrection in their own time." He observes that it was believed also in the primitive age that the coming of Christ related to the destruction of Jerusalem. These admissions are very frank and important. But the apostles looked for the resurrection in their own time or age. The labor of the bishop was, therefore, very formidable, and his mode of meeting the difficulty deserves the credit of ingenuity, although it will not probably prove very satisfactory to the reader. He explains the declaration of the Saviour, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," as not relating to the subjects of the Saviour's prophecy, although the declaration forms a part of the general account, but only to the *signs* of the event which was foretold. The

The subject of the resurrection, it will also be perceived by every one who particularly studies the declarations upon this subject, is always mentioned by the apostles as one of difficulty and obscurity. Paul says, when speaking of it, "Behold, I show you a mystery." It will be observed that the writers of the New Testament do not treat the subject in so direct and plain a manner that, when we undertake to penetrate their figurative style, we are able to derive a clear idea of the manner of the resurrection. Our conceptions, as the examination of the following passages will show, are traditional, rather than scriptural.

The resurrection is sometimes spoken of in such a way, for example, as not to suggest the idea of rising out of the grave; still, the word translated resurrection etymologically imports a standing up, and the idea of rising is very frequently employed. (1 Cor. xv. 16, 35, 42, 43; John vi.

word "all," therefore, in the opinion of this prelate, does not relate to the principal subjects of the preceding context, but only to their indications. But, even if this were true, it escaped the prelate's attention that the Saviour says, in immediate connection, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that *it* [the event, and not the sign] is near, even at the doors." The Saviour taught the disciples that the signs would be an indication when to fly from the event itself. The words of our Saviour (Matt. xvi. 28), "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," Bishop Horsley explains as a *menace*, addressed to the Jews; as if the Saviour had said, "There are some of you standing here who shall not taste the pains of the second death in the place prepared for the wicked, after the abolition of the intermediate state, until you have first seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom." It might appear scarcely credible that such an explanation had proceeded from any man; but a whole sermon is devoted to this text, and much of it to this particular explanation. One thing, however, has been made apparent by the efforts of this able writer, — that the greatest acuteness is unable to destroy the evidence that the resurrection was predicted as an event to occur while some who heard the Saviour speak were still living.

39, and other passages.) But, as the body is not spoken of as being raised, but simply the dead, the idea does not import a rising out of the grave, or the quickening of the matter of the old body. The Saviour says of one that receives him, that he will raise *him* up at the last day; and in this manner Paul will be found invariably to speak in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians. There is only an apparent exception in this last chapter. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (vs. 44.) But it is evident that "body" is not the nominative of the verb, which is impersonal. The meaning, therefore, is, "There is a natural body sown; there is a spiritual body raised."

It has frequently been alleged, however, that the apostle's image, of seed sown and growing again, necessarily imports the resurrection of some part of the old body; for some portion of the seed does not perish, but becomes the germ of the new plant. But, as the apostle is not speaking of bodies, but of men or of the dead, it should rather be said that his illustration imports that man does not perish when he descends to the grave, or dies, but will live again spiritually and bodily. This is all that the image necessarily implies. The illustration is compatible with no portion of the body whatever being raised.

Nothing is more common to us than to speak and think of the man himself as lying in the grave, and being borne to it. We speak of having attended the funeral of such a one; of having followed him to the grave. It is impossible to divest ourselves altogether of the idea that the body is the man, or that the man and the body are inseparable. All that we know of man comes through his body; his emotions and his thoughts are all expressed through the animal organization. His words are uttered by his tongue, and his letters written by his hand. It is natural, therefore, to

speaking of one as lying dead in his chamber, as we often do. And this, undoubtedly, helps to explain the idea of rising or resurrection as used in the New Testament. Man is naturally regarded, in this way of speaking, as being prostrated or thrown down by death, and as being lifted or raised up again. Still, the source of this imagery may be partly derived from the illustrative conceptions of the Old Testament.*

The principal expressions of the New Testament, therefore, relating to the resurrection, of which this expression itself is one, do not necessarily import a resurrection of the particular body which dies. We shall see whether these expressions are conjoined with any others in such a way as to denote anything of this kind.

In Romans (viii. 11) we read, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." This passage is frequently, but erroneously, taken as referring to the resurrection; but it will be seen, from the context, that it does not, as the ablest critics are agreed, refer to the resurrection at all. The apostle is not speaking of dead, but of dying, or mortal bodies; for those whom the apostle addressed were certainly not literally dead. He is not speaking of the resurrection in the context, but of the influence of the carnal state, or of the flesh. He says that believers are no longer *in the flesh*, but in the spirit. He cannot mean that they are literally dead, and departed from the body; although he may speak of the body as figuratively dead, as something whose corrupt passions should be dead to Christians; and he says that God will quicken or

* See Ps. xvi. 9, 10; xvii. 15; Isaiah xxv. 7, 8; xxvi. 19, — compare vs. 14; Ezek. xxxvii. 11–14; Dan. xii. 2, 13; Hosea xiii. 14.

impart a holy character to the bodies of believers — which are mortal or morally dead — by his Spirit which dwells in them. The quickening which he means is manifestly the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart.*

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. iii. 21.) This passage manifestly does refer to the resurrection. But the apostle does not say that the body will be raised, but changed. It is remarkable, also, that, while speaking of all believers, he says, “our vile body,” — using the singular, rather than the plural. It is reasonable to infer, therefore, that he means, or that the spirit of inspiration meant, the bodily state. To speak of this as being changed, does not imply any alteration or resuscitation of the present body.

This is not the place to enter into the physiological question, which may be left to physiologists, whether anything whatever belonging to our present bodies will constitute any part of the new. The apostle prays for the Thessalonian Christians, that their whole spirit, soul, and body, might be preserved blameless till Christ came according to the prediction of his speedy coming. (1 Thess. v. 23.) Dr. Doddridge observes, upon this passage, that, as has been shown by Vitringa, rabbis and philosophers conceived that man was composed of three distinct substances, — the rational spirit, the animal soul, and the visible body, — which, he thinks, derives support from this text.† Whether the animal soul, or the essential principle of the body, is preserved at death and becomes the germ of the new body, is a curious, but, it is believed, not an important question, in this inquiry. It will not be found necessary to resort to

* See Stuart on the Romans.

† Doddridge on this passage.

such an hypothesis in explaining the resurrection. Plants and animals grow from a seed or germ; and a germ may exist or be produced in the present body which will produce the new.

1 Cor. xv. 35, — “But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” — is a passage which may be noticed from the association of “coming” with “being raised up.” There is nothing difficult in this passage. “Coming,” and “being raised up,” are undoubtedly equivalent expressions; and the resurrection of believers is associated with the Saviour’s coming, and might be spoken of in a similar manner. But there is nothing in the idea of coming which imports a resuscitation of the materials of the old body; nor does the expression denote that the resurrection would be visible, and occur upon the earth, any more than the coming of the Saviour possessed these characters.

We may also notice 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. — “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” It should be observed that the apostle says that what he is about to say, and what he says in this passage, is quite mysterious; and, of course, that he did not speak altogether intelligibly to those whom he addressed, nor, undoubtedly, with a clear personal understanding of the subject. This is a very important fact. The subject of the resurrection was mysterious to the apostolic church, and the declarations of the apostle in this passage must have been very much so.

We have frequently, it must be admitted, conceived the idea, and allowed it to pass current, that a trumpet will literally sound at the resurrection, which we have been

accustomed to regard as altogether future. But the apostle refers to a particular trumpet; and the reference is plainly to the Saviour's prophecy that at his coming he would send his angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, who would gather together his elect from every part of the earth. This, undoubtedly, relates to the preaching of the Gospel at the proper commencement of the Christian age. At that time, when those who are called angels, or messengers, commenced their mission, the resurrection was to occur.

A natural impression might also be that the apostle meant that the resurrection would all occur at one time. It seems to be said that the dead would all be raised in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, when the trumpet should sound. But the apostle does not say this. It is sufficient to understand his meaning to be that the resurrection of every believer, when it occurred, would be in a moment. And such we must take to be the case. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, every believer feels himself changed, — an expression which the apostle uses, — and placed in his new bodily condition in some other world. This is a glorious hope for the church, and one which disarms death, to a pious mind, of all its terrors. Christ was to abolish death at his coming; and it was signally done in this manner.

The following passage may be taken in the same style as the preceding; that is, as manifestly allegorical. — “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them

which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 13-18.)

When the soul departs from the earth, it must necessarily enter the region of clouds. Still, the original text scarcely says this; but that we shall be caught up, or snatched up, as though the act were sudden, *ἐν νεφέλαις*, rendered "in the clouds." This expression may be taken adverbially, as denoting that the subject was obscure or cloudy. Cloudily the saints shall be taken up. Their transmutation will take place in such a manner as to be unseen; as though beyond the clouds, or invested with them. The expression is evidently taken from the Saviour's own words — those in which he foretold his coming; or from the manner in which his own change took place, beyond the "cloud which received him out of their sight."

As to the expression "to meet the Lord in the air," — this would be proper to an allegorical style, in which the conceptions were taken from existing things and beliefs. It could not be supposed that an allegory would have been written, in the apostolic age, with those exact conceptions of nature which exist at the present time. Nor does the merit of an allegory require that the sources from which it draws its fanciful materials, in order to clothe its truths, should be themselves true: they may be as fanciful as their use. It is clear that the ancients had no conceptions of the exact limits of the atmosphere. The sky was to them a boundary as indefinite as their ideas of the universe. In

the record of the creation, as we have already seen, the word firmament is used exactly with the indefiniteness, also, of "in the air," in the text, since the sun and the moon were both placed in it. Besides, although we speak of the definite limits of the atmosphere, or of the expansion of aërial principles from our earth, we know, as has been before observed, neither their exact boundary, nor whether they do not actually fill all the spaces of the creation; that is, whether something which belongs in character to our atmosphere, and by which light is transmitted, is not universal. But, let the fact be as it may, "the firmament" was extended enough to contain the heavenly bodies; and no obscurity is presented by an allegory taken from this doctrine.

"Caught up together with them," is just such an expression as might be used in an allegory, since it denotes an association with those intended, without indicating the time. The position of the words in the original is somewhat different from that in which they stand in our version. "Together with them," or just as they were, we shall be "caught up in clouds."

But the allegory of this interesting passage, in which truths of such sublimity and importance are taught under such imposing metaphors, is broken or rendered transparent in several ways. The apostle says that in one particular he speaks "by the word of the Lord;" qualifying, we may reasonably believe, all the rest that he says, as not taught him by inspiration, but as derived from the language of the Saviour upon this subject, which was the sole source of his information. The fact which he communicated from the Lord was, that those who should live till the second coming would not be restored to a bodily condition before those who died previous to that event and who

remained asleep. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep." * It must have been necessarily the case, with the key which we possess upon this subject, that departed saints would be restored to their bodily condition, upon Christ's coming, without waiting for the restoration of all the pious who should afterwards die.

The apostle also says, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." No intimation is afforded that the saints would return from the ærial regions to dwell upon the earth, or to live here during the thousand years of the millennium; but they would enter into their permanent state, and be forever with the Lord. In heaven they can be forever with him. And as each saint departs this life, we learn from this interesting passage, in conjunction with the former by the same apostle, he rises, with scarcely or not even a momentary experience of death, as a separation from a material state, into the ærial regions, and there meets the Lord, and acquires at once, by divine power, his "building of God," his new body, entering at once, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," into all the superior blessings of the Redeemer's kingdom. As the Lord destroyed and restored the flesh upon the hand of Moses in a moment; as He bid him put his hand into his bosom, when it became leprous, and to return it again, when it became like his other flesh (Ex. iv. 6, 7); and as he provided a bodily form for the angels who came under the former dispensation in transient visits to the earth: he can place the spirits of

* Hug (Introduction to the New Testament, Part II., § 91) conceives that this implies that some members of the Thessalonian church were alarmed lest, if the resurrection should be long delayed, or till after their death, they should not enjoy the happiness of seeing it, or of participating in that glorious event.

his people as instantly in their "eternal" house in heaven. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal *in the heavens*."*

We should expect to find very little, in so figurative a book as the Revelations, which would require particular attention for the purpose of establishing the consistency of the Scriptures upon this subject. The twentieth chapter, however, of this book, will claim a moment's notice. In the eleventh and fifteenth verses, inclusive, of this chapter, we read as follows: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (hades) gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

This interesting passage is worthy of a particular exposition, but it will be proper only to refer to those parts which relate to the resurrection.

The chapter which contains this passage is highly figurative. The descent of an angel from heaven to bind Satan with a chain, and to shut him up in a bottomless abyss for a thousand years, is evidently a figurative conception. The reigning of the saints mentioned is a dominion

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

of their *souls*. The allegory seems, therefore, to break, and to teach us that literal persons are not meant. There would seem, therefore, to be no reason to doubt that the case is of the same nature as the prediction of John the Baptist as Elijah, and of the Saviour under the character of David.

Nor is it necessary to conceive that the remaining portions of the prophecy are any more literal. To construe it in a literal manner, as it is usually taken, would be inconsistent, it is manifest, with the predictions of the Saviour and of the apostles respecting the occurrence of the resurrection in the first century; for *all* the dead are represented as judged. That the passage is not to be taken literally, is obvious from the fact, that while the invisible world (hell, or hades) is represented as delivering up its dead, the sea and death are likewise represented as doing the same. But it is manifest that while hades must contain all the dead, they cannot be there and in the sea at the same time. And what can be the literal sense of saying that death as well as the sea and hades would deliver up its dead? But it will be observed, in this prophecy, that when the world is represented, small and great, as standing before God, they are still called "the dead," and they are still called "the dead" when judged. *The living* are nowhere mentioned as delivered up, nor as judged. The judgment intended relates only to those who lived in ages preceding the time denoted. Nor can we doubt what it will be. We may leave some of the allusions unexplained. But it is the final judgment, and one which inaugurates the complete establishment of the kingdom of God among men. It occurs when the last enemies of God have been destroyed; after the man of sin, or all the Christian apostasies, and Gog and Magog. have perished.

Then there will be a judgment of the world. Mankind will look back upon the past, and survey it all. Everything will come up in review. All characters will be summoned before the bar of mankind. The sea will not be able to shelter its dead, and hades will deliver up its populations. Those who have passed more completely under the power of death, who have gone to the final doom of the wicked, will be delivered up to pass the scrutiny of human judgments, enlightened by the word and by the experience of past ages. Whatever may be meant by "the books," the Bible, which consists of many parts, might be called "the books," and the New Testament may be very fitly denoted as "the book of life," as pointing out the characters upon which eternal life is conferred. This great book of revelation will finally shed its rays of judgment over the whole world. The testimonies of history will facilitate the application of its principles. Under the magic pens of Burnet, Robertson, Macaulay, and Scott, the past is now vividly recalled; but history will become a still more alluring field of instruction; and when the great dramas of the world have concluded, and the mind shall be able to survey and to combine all the past, the most momentous lessons in human experience will be afforded to mankind. Wicked examples will be assembled from all parts of time, and, set in comparison with the good, will become salutary warnings to the world. The dead, assembled for these purposes, will be condemned, when evil, by the universal verdict of mankind; and the renewal of the judgment which was past upon them at the termination of their lives may be called their "second death." An age of virtue will effectually abolish the dread of death; and, a renovated condition immediately, in the twinkling of an eye, succeeding the dissolution of the present body, the last feeble glance upon this world being

instantly succeeded by a glorious vision of another, death and the curse will be no more. "Death and hell (hades) will be cast into the lake of fire." This may be regarded as a just, though general, exposition of this memorable passage; and there is nothing in it inconsistent with the declarations of Christ and his apostles. Some prejudices may linger upon the old traditional and fanciful explanations, but they will be prejudices retained only at the expense of the consistency of revelation.

No passage, therefore, thus far considered, points out the manner of the resurrection in such a way that we can tell how that event takes place. The Bible states the fact of a recovery of the bodily state, and invests it with a variety of conceptions, especially such as the Saviour saw fit to use in denoting his coming. *Yet under all these images but one fact is revealed; namely, the redemption of the body, or the restoration to a bodily state.* Nothing hinders that this event should take place in a distant world, whither the soul, with its capacities for a material investment, is borne with the rapidity with which thought can travel. (Dan. ix. 21.) No portion of the matter of this globe is necessarily borne away from it; but the soul only need to be considered as entering its eternal house in heaven.

There has been no difficulty, therefore, thus far, with the possession of the key which we have had in the Saviour's prophecy to the complex allegory of this subject, in reconciling the Scriptures with one another and with fact. Two passages alone remain in the New Testament for consideration in the way of reconciliation.

The most remarkable passage seemingly, relating to the manner of the resurrection, is John v. 25-29: a passage very memorable in the history of biblical exposition, as

showing, more than almost any other instance in the Scriptures, that criticism will labor in vain, in the study of words and grammatical forms, when the prophecies are to be explained, unless the key of the allegory has been first acquired. Words used in allegorical forms can obviously not be fully explained by their use in the ordinary modes of speech. It is the purpose of the allegory, rather than the common principles of exegesis, in which the true art of the exposition lies. The case is by no means incapable of explanation in harmony with other statements of the Scriptures. The passage has done more, perhaps, than any other in the sacred volume, to sustain the belief that the *bodies* of the dead are all to be raised literally from their graves. We will first attend to the following declaration :

“Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (vs. 28, 29.)

All the dead are here represented as being *in their graves*. Nothing could make it more apparent that the Saviour does not intend to be understood in a literal manner. The bodies of all the dead of the preceding ages could not have been said to have been in the grave ; and their persons certainly were not. And they must, upon any literal principle, have already come forth, or have been resuscitated, to have been rendered capable of hearing the voice of the Saviour.

The Saviour, therefore, must be conceived to have spoken in the prophetic style, and to have invested his meaning with allegory. The passage is, therefore, not inconsistent with there having been no visible resurrection in the gen-

eration to which the Saviour spoke. It was doubtless common to speak of the dead as being in their graves, as we have frequently heard exhortations enforced by a reference to those who sleep in the church-yard. The Saviour chose to speak in this manner.

Nor can we be at a loss to understand his meaning. The ruling idea of the passage is to be found in the preceding verse. The Saviour had said that authority had been given him to execute judgment also, as well as to raise the dead, of which he had been speaking. The passage is an enforcement or continuance of this declaration. He bid the Jews not to be surprised at the declaration of his authority as a judge, for the hour was coming when he would exercise this office universally, and judge all who had lived in the world. The ruling idea is that of judging, and the passage may be explained in the same manner as that in the Revelations which has just been considered. The work of the judgment, it will be recollected, is that of the saints. (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3; Rev. xx. 4.) Christ judges the world only in his people and by his word. And as soon as Christianity was established, the old world was judged; judged upon those irreversible principles, which admit men to heaven, or consign them to the perdition of the wicked.

We must remember that the Saviour, in addressing the Jews, spoke to them in parables. He used the allegorical style, he informs us, that they might not entirely comprehend his declarations; a clear exposition of his meaning he reserved for any of their number who became his genuine disciples, and especially for those who were to bear witness of his life and doctrines. The Saviour frequently used the Jewish modes of speaking. In his parable of the rich man and Lazarus he expressed himself exactly in their style,

and represented the dead as within sight and hearing of each other.

It is not the purpose of this work to discuss the question respecting the species of punishment, which is undoubtedly eternal, which God finally inflicts upon the wicked. The words death and destruction are its proper distinctions, whatever may be imported by these expressions; and the resurrection, which is through Christ only, is denoted in the New Testament as the peculiar hope of the righteous. (Luke xx. 35, 36; Phil. iii. 11.) If the wicked are destroyed, therefore, at their death, as God threatens to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. x. 28), the explanation which has been given would be rendered absolutely necessary.

It should be further observed that it is well known that the preposition ($\epsilon\iota\varsigma$) rendered "unto" gives a peculiar character to a Greek sentence. It denotes instrumentally the object upon which the writer fixes his mind. The meaning of the sentence (vs. 29) is that the dead shall be summoned forth for the purpose expressed. And that purpose is not denoted as a resurrection simply or purely, but as a resurrection of a peculiar character, namely, a condemning resurrection, a resurrection of damnation or of judgment, and a resurrection of which life would be the award. As a change of heart is denoted as a resurrection, in a similar manner the arraignment of mankind before the bar of our minds appears to be called a resurrection. It should be observed, also, that the Saviour appropriately styles himself the Son of *man*, in reference to this judgment, while he takes a higher title of the Son of God, in reference to a different event in a preceding verse (vs. 35).

There is nothing, therefore, in this apparently formidable

passage, and which has been interpreted so long upon a principle inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture—nothing at all which teaches the literal resuscitation of the deceased and wasted body. The whole passage, however, to which the verses already considered belong, consists of two parts, distinguished by some expressions which have been noticed by critics, who have been obliged to deepen the allegory more than is needful to support the meaning which they have assigned.

In both parts the Saviour said that the events intended were just at hand. “The hour is coming.” The word “hour” manifestly denotes the speedy arrival of the events. In the first part, the Saviour draws the event designed nearer still by another expression—“The hour is coming, *and now is.*” There are two events, therefore, denoted, distinguished by these different expressions. The whole passage is as follows :

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself ; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this ; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (vs. 25–29.)

The reader must be patient, if he would pursue the straight path of this remarkable prophecy through all the opposing points by which he might be tempted astray by the mode of speaking and the allusions employed. Attempting the labyrinth of prophecy without the key or clue, is

more hazardous than adventuring into the labyrinth of Egypt was, without such a provision, as we may see from the evidences of misadventure which crowd the way.

It will be observed that a general resurrection to "life" is not spoken of in the first part of this passage; but those only should be raised who would hear. Their living was on condition of their hearing. — "And they that hear shall live." We may believe that this declaration was the source of some apostolical allusions, and of some of the allegorical representations in the Revelations. But, let this be as it may, those only should live who would hear. Critics have conceived, from this fact, that a moral renovation is intended, rather than a restoration to a bodily state, or a proper resurrection.* We must, in the first place, therefore, inquire whether the Saviour speaks of a real or of a spiritual resurrection.

In attending to the preceding context, it will be observed that the Saviour had said that he would do greater works than he had hitherto done, that they, the living Jews, might marvel. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." (vs. 20, 21.) No other thought could arise in the mind, at this point of the Saviour's discourse, than that he meant a real resurrection. He uses two words, apparently to prevent all ambiguity, and speaks of *raising* and *quicken*ing the dead. God raised the dead under the old dispensation, and the Saviour teaches us that he will repeat these acts of the divine power. And, as a matter of fact, the Saviour did, soon after this declaration, restore the dead to life upon several occasions, not having previously mani-

* Tholuck on John. — Doddridge mingles the two conceptions of a real and of a tropical resurrection in his exposition.

fested his power in this respect. He raised the widow's son and Lazarus, and restored the daughter of Jairus.

In what follows of the context, the Saviour speaks of the judgment. And he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (vs. 24.) The consistency of a real resurrection might seem here to be broken, and a moral renovation only to be intended; for "death" and "condemnation" appear to be equivalent terms. But the inconsistency is apparent only. The Saviour speaks of his "word," or the truths of the Gospel, and says that he who heard it or obeyed it, as such an expression means, and believed on the Father by whom the Saviour was sent, had everlasting life, or had this blessing assured to him, and should not come into condemnation or the judgment, but had passed from death unto life. It is almost unnecessary to observe that we are taught in the New Testament that the judgment is an event which belongs to the wicked only. Paul, therefore, consistently says, that if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we do undergo a judgment of any kind, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.) The Saviour, it will be remembered, also, told Martha, upon the death of her brother, that those who believed on him should never die. (John xi. 26.) Nor did they die in the proper scriptural sense, or suffer the death which is the proper penalty of sin; and to pass from death unto life is, therefore, to pass from a state in which death is rendered certain, or from the natural state, to a state of life, or a state of piety which secures the blessing of everlasting life.

The Saviour, therefore, had in mind a real resurrection,

although he speaks of the conditions by which that event, with its felicities, may be attained; and he goes on immediately to say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He passes on then to speak of his authority to judge mankind, and introduces that figurative mode of speaking which has just been explained.

But if the Saviour meant a literal resurrection in the case particularly under consideration, what shall we do with the declaration that the dead should soon hear the voice of the Son of God, and that those who heard should live? The event, it appears plain, would take place sooner than the arraignment of mankind, under the image of a resurrection, subsequently spoken of. In the latter case it is said, "the hour is coming," but in the present, or former, "*the hour is coming, and now is.*" Such language must necessarily denote that the event was almost immediately to happen. The *life* intended is also plain. It is everlasting life. How, then, would the dead very soon hear the voice of Christ, and attain to the life which Christ brought in the Gospel by this means?

No problem would be more difficult than this, in our ordinary way of viewing the condition of the dead in the ages which preceded the Christian dispensation. But we are required, by the necessity of the case, to believe that there must be some sense in which the Saviour could address the dead of past times, and some sense in which their admission to everlasting life was dependent upon their receiving his message.

If our common opinions fail us in meeting the necessity

of this case, we have only to recur to those which were held in the earlier Christian ages, in order to obtain its consistent explanation. In the Apostle's Creed, a venerable monument of at least an early time, we meet with the tradition, which we elsewhere discover sufficiently to know that it extensively prevailed, that the Saviour descended after his crucifixion into Hades, or the invisible world, and there and then caused the dead—that is, those who are so denominated, perhaps from the loss of their bodily state*—to understand him, and to receive him as the promised Messiah. The doctrine of purgatory, favored so early as Augustine, and even earlier, and even by this “father” himself, unquestionably grew out of this subject, and lingers yet, as we well know, a powerful instrument of superstition in the Roman church.†

But we are not willing to venture sacred interpretation with so uncertain a guide as tradition, however ancient.

* Whether the pious dead of the former dispensation remained in a state of unconsciousness in the invisible world, would require a very careful and somewhat extensive study of apparently very opposite passages to decide. The appearance of Moses and Elias at the transfiguration has a real but rather ambiguous bearing upon this question.

† The opinions of the primitive church and of “the fathers” upon Christ's descent into Hades, and his preaching to the dead, may be seen by consulting the “Apostolic Fathers,” and Pearson on the Creed. It appears, from the satisfactory collections of Bishop Pearson, that the descent of Christ into Hades, his preaching there, and his delivering some of the dead, was the faith of the ancient churches. Yet different persons differed widely upon this subject. Hades appears to have been generally taken in its classical sense, and in that which accords with the Hebrew use of a similar word; and the descent of Christ was, therefore, regarded as designed to deliver saints. Others, as Augustine, who thought there was little consistency in regarding the patriarchs and prophets as needing to be delivered, believed that Christ descended to the place of torment and delivered some of the wicked, or all of them. So early did the doctrine of purgatory take root in the church.

In drawing our net through the writings of "fathers" and the decisions of councils, we should collect a mass of absurdity, with a little that is valuable, which would render forever contemptible the whole business of sacred criticism. But those who have regarded the descent of Christ into Hades as a fable are not aware that it is explicitly taught in the New Testament. Calvin believed it so far as to engraft upon it his theory of the atonement, and to hold that the Saviour descended to hell and tasted the miseries of the damned for a season.* We shall perceive, however, what the Scriptures say upon this subject.

Two passages have long remained in a state of obscurity, in the sacred volume, which the critical labors of most Protestants have been unable to explain. They have been explained as relating to the heathen, to Noah's own family, and as stating the fact that the Gospel was preached by Noah to the men of the old world. Others have taken

* Calvin leaves us somewhat in doubt as to the place where he thought that Christ endured the torments of the damned. But he plainly says, "If Christ had merely died a corporeal death, no end would have been accomplished by it ; it was requisite, also, that he should feel the severity of the divine vengeance, in order to appease the wrath of God, and satisfy his justice. Hence it was necessary for him to contend with the powers of hell and the horrors of *eternal death*." (Institutes, B. II., chap. xvi.) He adds, that "some contentious but illiterate men" exclaim against him, as though he were guilty of an atrocious injury to Christ. But we ought, he says, "as Ambrose justly advises, fearlessly to acknowledge the sorrow of Christ, unless we are ashamed of his cross." (§ xii.) Few men appear ever to have been so thoroughly convinced of the absolute truth of their theoretical expositions of the Scriptures as Calvin ; and it was a great fault of his character that he was impatient of any dissent from his opinions ; and perhaps of the age, that he spared no terms of opprobrium against his opponents, and treated them with what we should now consider to be gross and vulgar abuse. Luther and More certainly, also, possessed this venom of the tongue ; nor did the severer taste of Erasmus altogether withhold him from it.

them in their more literal import. The passages are as follows :

“ For Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit, by which, also, he went and preached unto the spirits in prison (or in confinement) ; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah ; while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.” (1 Pet. iii. 18–20.)

“ For for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Pet. iv. 6.)

We will attend to these remarkable passages, with that regard to their connection and to their several statements from which alone we can hope to educe their meaning. And the labor will repay the pains.

It is remarkable that the only difficulty with these passages has been that they affirm that the Saviour, after his decease, went himself, in a disembodied state, and preached to the dead who were also in a disembodied condition. It has been impossible to deny that the text, as it now stands, is historically as correct as other parts of the New Testament ; and, in the want of proof of a corrupt text, several conjectures have been offered to remove the appearance of the literal statement. It has been proposed to change the text in such a manner as to make it affirm that Enoch or Noah preached the Gospel in the case referred to. But to alter the Scriptures because their meaning is inconsistent with existing opinions, would soon leave us no pure text whatever.

It is well known that the history of opinions favors the

literal statement. But we have much stronger confirmation of the truth of this statement in the fact, as we have seen it, that, according to John, the Saviour must have addressed the dead and proffered them "life." And the confirmation will be strengthened by contemplating the expressions used by Peter.

"By which," it is said, that is, (*πνευματι*) in his spirit, "he," the Saviour, "went and preached to the spirits in prison." The grammatical subject is clear, and is plainly Christ. That Christ is the preacher intended, is also clearly shown by such statements as that "he *went* and preached," and that he went *after* his decease. It is not possible, therefore, according to the prevailing opinion, that Enoch or Noah should have been intended, unless they lived after the Saviour's decease. The word "spirit" meant the Saviour's own spirit, and not the Holy Spirit, as a simple inspection of the Greek text is sufficient to convince any Greek reader. Two words (*μεν* and *δε*) show that (*σαρκι*), "flesh," and (*πνευματι*), "spirit," are to be taken in the same general way, as parts of the same statement, namely, that Christ died as to his body, and lived as to his spirit; by which (the latter) he went and preached to the spirits, who are represented as being in some state of confinement, or safe keeping, with which the idea of punishment is not at all necessarily connected. Paul, also, in a familiar passage, speaks of Christ as having "descended into the lower parts of the earth." (Eph. iv. 9.)

But the case is confirmed in the most absolute manner by the statement of Peter: "For *for this cause* was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." The rendering, "for this cause," is indisputably correct; and the cause can only be the neces-

sity of a judgment of which the apostle speaks in the preceding verse. "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead — for for this cause, &c." The cause must then be that Christ was appointed judge of mankind, and judge both of the living and the dead. And since he was not personally to appear, he must either have gone or sent to the invisible world in order to have judged the dead. The statement made is, that the Gospel was preached to some who were dead, that they might receive the same judgment or trial as those who lived and heard the Gospel. The point of the case is, that the Gospel is the great means of salvation, or test of character; and since some, who had lived in previous ages, had not enjoyed its advantages, it was carried to them by the Saviour.

Let us, then, gratefully accept the fact, as we must, that some of the dead of former ages heard the Gospel some time previous to their resurrection, and that those who accepted it received the blessing of eternal life.

We are not responsible for the perversion which men may make of this subject, or of any other portion of the Word of God. A portion of the Episcopal church has long innocently held the doctrine of Christ's descent into "hell;" and Calvin maintained it, whether exceptionably or not. The time ought to have come when men will receive the whole Word of God, irrespective of its liability to perversion, and irrespective of prejudice. Whatever may have been true of the disobedient who died *before* the coming of Christ, it is at least true that those who have the Gospel and reject it are condemned already. The Gospel, with its proffers and discriminations, constitutes the only trial which men will ever receive, and the punishment of the disobedient will be "everlasting." It is needless to cite

passages upon this plain case. And in regard to the dead of former times, it is not said that those who were "some-time disobedient" were altogether impenitent, and that Noah and his family comprised the whole number of the pious who lived at the time of the flood. Peter qualifies the "salvation" of the eight members of this family as having been *by water*. They were saved from the flood. It is not necessary to conceive that the whole number were pious like Noah; nor should we suppose that they were, in reading the account which is subsequently given of them. But God did not see fit to save any greater number from the flood than the eight souls of this family; and Noah alone is mentioned as being pious. (Heb. xi. 7.) Other pious persons may have suffered in the overflow of waters for their unbelief in the flood. Real believers do not credit alike every part of the divine message now; nor do they escape judgment at the present time. If Calvinists, and Arminians, and even such as belong to the Roman church, may be saved, they enter heaven with very different conceptions of the divine message.

Still, it must be admitted that the case of the dead was not in all instances fully settled until they had had a trial by the Gospel.* To pursue this case further would be venturing upon conjecture; and we may very fitly pause where the statements of Scripture leave us. We are not warranted in believing that any portion of the truly wicked received the message of the Gospel after their death.

* In the Shepherd of Hermas we meet with the following statement, which shows the existing belief in the church at that time, as this work was even appointed to be read in the churches. — "For the repentance of the righteous has its end: the days of repentance are fulfilled to all the saints; but to the heathen, there is repentance even unto the last day." — First Book of Hermas, Vision II.

Yet this subject may cast a ray of light upon a subject which has hitherto awakened a very melancholy interest. If we contemplate the case of many millions of heathen, incapable of acquiring any portion of Christian knowledge, and think of the case of children who die in periods of life before the adequate development of reason, and view the case of many others whose temporal condition is the sole cause of their destitution of Christian knowledge, we shall be willing to accept any light which the passages considered may shed upon these melancholy cases. It is impossible that we should conceive it to be just that any portion of the human family should be doomed to everlasting sorrows—if that is the punishment of the wicked—merely on account of their natural and involuntary condition. Good men have thought that infants and young children are put on probation in another world, and that some of the heathen will be saved. In regard to the wicked heathen, their case is settled; for those who sin without law will also perish without law. (Rom. ii. 12.) But those who have conformed to such moral rules as they have had are worthy of a better fate. And pious parents can hardly contemplate their infant children who die as falling into the common lot of the wicked. They were overshadowed by a covenant while living, and why may they not be when they depart from this life? Certain we may be that the God, and merciful Father, who extended compassion to those who were some time disobedient before the flood, and who remembers his covenant to a thousand generations, will not deal less mercifully with the good heathen, nor with the deceased children of the pious. If Christ saved the good of ante-evangelic ages, who were nevertheless deficient in their faith, and saved them by the Gospel, he will, doubtless, save all now by this means who enter the eternal

world and are worthy to receive the offer of life. We are told that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should attain to the blessings of salvation. This is an exalting view of the economy of grace, and raises the Gospel to that point of dignity and justice which we feel that it merits. Certainly, the subject of the eternal condemnation of men has been carried by individual preachers, and even upon a greater scale, to a point of representation which casts over the beneficent character of the Gospel a shade of horror and of malignity. The Gospel has appeared with an air of ferocity which is altogether foreign to its nature. But, although the Gospel is benignant, it does not justify a *neglect*; and he who disregards it will experience that just weight of condemnation which will sweep away all the hopes of the miserable offender.

One other passage it will be necessary to notice. It is said (Heb. ix. 27), "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." This might be carelessly taken to mean that the judgment will occur at the end of the world, after the death of all mankind; which would be untrue in fact, since the judgment is a continuous event. But the passage more naturally suggests a judgment of each individual, which takes place immediately after his natural death. Such may be the fact. Nevertheless, the apostle introduces the text as a part of his argument. It has been observed, by critics, that the point of the argument, as relates to Christ, is, that as men die only once, so Christ died or offered himself once, and perfected his offering. But for what purpose is "the judgment" referred to, in such an argument? It is manifest that the stress of the argument is upon the word "appointed." Death was appointed as the original penalty, and this Christ endured; and fulfilled, therefore, so much of his representa-

tion of mankind, or of those who believe, since he died in their stead. But something was wanting to perfect his priesthood, or his deliverance of believers from the evils of the fall. And this was to be effected by the appointment of "judgment," in addition to natural death, as a mode by which the church will be perfected, and the world delivered from its evils. The judgment of the Christian age, which ever accompanies the truth, and acts like fire upon the sinner's conscience, will be the great instrument by which the Redeemer will effect his purpose in coming to this world. This meaning is consistent with the context and with fact. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once *offered* to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him [when the judgment with its designs would occur] shall he appear the second time without sin *unto salvation*" [or for that purpose]. Death may be said to have been the punishment of all the ages preceding the Christian; but since Christ has abolished death, judgment has been substituted in the Christian age, involving death also, or eternal death, to the wicked.

We may here pause in the labor of criticism, and view the results of our task. We have seen, by a careful attention to the passages which seemed to support a contrary doctrine, that the Scriptures do not teach that the bodies of the dead will be recovered from their resolution into their original elements; that the scriptural doctrine is that of the resurrection or standing again of the dead, or a restoration simply to a bodily state. The Scriptures are consistent with each other upon this explanation, and are consistent upon no other plan. No error could have been carried so consistently through the sacred volume.

No subject can be more interesting than the conclusion

which we have thus attained. The general resurrection of mankind commenced at the epoch predicted by the apostles, before the generation then living had gone to their graves. The exact point when it commenced could not be distinguished by "observation," any more than the second coming, of which it was a part. (Luke xvii. 20.) The doom of natural death continues to rest upon all men. But all do not any more descend to the sepulchre, or the grave. This idea of death, and death in its fuller sense, has no significance to those who believe. Christ has "abolished death" to them, and "brought life and immortality to light." (2 Tim. i. 10.) A separation from a bodily state does not for a moment occur; but in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the new bodily condition is attained, though in some other world. No particle of "flesh and blood," which is unable to "inherit" the kingdom of God, nothing of the animal matter of the present body, will be borne away from this earth. The quantity of matter which exists now, in the balancings of the solar system, will remain. But the soul alone departs, and is immediately reïvested with a bodily form. Sights and sounds will immediately open upon the sense which had just before fainted in death. The change will be great from this world, and from the chamber of death, to the renovated and perfected bodily condition, — to go from time to eternity, from a house of clay to an eternal habitation in the heavens.

But, if the subject is so interesting in itself, it becomes still more so as connected with the great purpose of this work. We possess now the means for determining with absolute precision that many worlds have now, and have long been, populating with intelligent moral beings from

this earth. The process of replenishing them has been going on from the commencement of the Christian age.

Our labors have now, therefore, nearly approached their end. But it remains to consider the duration of the globe, and some other questions, of the deepest interest, growing out of the subject. After one or two more steps, we are fully to decide the question respecting the Plan of the Creation.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DURATION OF THE WORLD.

The Subject of the Duration of the World definitely Settled. — Jewish and Christian Traditions. — Apostolic Fathers. — Conflagration of the World. — This Conception Figurative. — Deliverances of the Pious under the Old Dispensation denoted under this Image. — The Jews Threatened by Moses under this Figure. — Absolute Proof upon the Subject. — Justification of the Image. — The New Heavens and the New Earth. — Births and the Death of the Body in the State of the New Heavens and the New Earth. — Use of Igneous Agencies in the Preparation of our Planet, and in the Heavenly Bodies. — Probability that these Agencies will be still further employed.

THE question now becomes one of no ordinary interest, after the discussions which have been already pursued, and which it is desirable now definitely to settle, how long this world will continue to furnish the populations of others, and how many worlds will be peopled from this planet?

Jewish and Christian traditions have taught us that the world will last for a cosmical week, each day of which will consist of a thousand years. At the expiration, therefore, of seven thousand years, the world would end; nor was it ever supposed that it would furnish the population of others. The universe was a mystery which Jewish and Christian philosophy never aspired to solve. God has reserved some better things for us; and astronomy and revelation invest

this problem with the highest interest, and furnish us with the means of its solution.*

When, then, is this world, which was so long preparing to be the residence of man, to end? Those events which were once supposed to lie at its termination, as the coming of Christ, the judgment, and the resurrection, we have

* The reader is probably satisfied in regard to the absurdity of Jewish traditions, as used to elucidate Christian subjects. Some reader, however, may be glad to know upon what grounds the belief that the world would last for seven thousand years, and then conclude, or be renewed under the new dispensation, was based. In the Epistle of Barnabas (one of the best and most worthy of credit of those writings which have been regarded as representing the earliest uninspired Christian literature, Mosh. His. Com.) it is said, that because the world was made *in six days*, and God rested upon *the seventh*, and because a day is said to be with the Lord as a thousand years, therefore all things will be concluded *in six thousand years*; and that Christ will then come, and change the sun and moon, and reign a thousand years, and then inaugurate the other world or age. The absurdity of such reasoning (very much like that which is common in this class of writings) is too manifest for observation. But it is upon reasoning so foolish that Christians have generally credited (for it has no other source) the doctrine that the world will continue only for seven thousand years. We have drawn long enough, and credulously enough, it must be admitted, from the impure well of mingled Jewish and ancient Christian tradition.

It will surprise some readers to learn that tradition (happily, less generally diffused) has fixed, with similar preposterous accuracy, the exact place of the judgment. This place is the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the deep and narrow valley of Kidron, east of Jerusalem. Christ will stand upon the Mount of Olives and judge the multitudes assembled in the valley. The Mahometans have been more particular in their descriptions, and have pointed out a projecting stone or column, built into the substructions of their mosque, and overhanging the valley, upon which the prophet will sit to judge mankind. We owe these legacies to Jewish and Christian glosses upon Joel iii. 1, 2, and Zech. xiv. 4, 5. And various Christian writers have received this idle story. See Winthrop's Lectures on the Second Advent, Lect. IV., P. II. The reader will find the subject treated as it deserves, and with great learning, by Edward Robinson, D.D., — "Biblical Researches in Palestine."

found to be distributed over its whole history since the first real establishment of Christianity, and to be, in fact, a part of its regular affairs. Those causes, therefore, which have supported the tradition that the world would end after seven thousand years, have in great part been removed. In fact, the end of the world has been passing into greater and greater remoteness, with every development of prophecy, and with the increasing experience of men. Mankind in the middle ages, and several times in the present generation, have been filled with terror, from some astronomical or religious prediction, lest the world should be upon the point of its final dissolution. Men, frenzied with this fear, have imparted their frenzy to others; and the wise and unwise have been affected with the same horror. Will this cause, which has so long set the waves of popular passion in motion, and been a recurring source of superstition, ever remain; and will successive generations tremble, as the present, at the approach of a comet, or at the insane or charlatanical predictions of a Miller?

The Scriptures teach us that "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the *earth abideth forever*." (Eccl. i. 4.) They teach us that Christ will reign as the Son of David *forever*, and that of his kingdom there will be *no end*. (Luke i. 33.) Here forever is explained by an entirely unambiguous expression. The promised land, also, was given to Abraham and to his seed forever. (Gen. xiii. 15; xvii. 7.)

But does not the Bible teach the conflagration of the earth? It does, indeed, and of the heavens also; and if the earth is literally to be burned up with fire, the heavens must perish in the same conflagration. But it appears to have escaped attention that this is an image not unfrequently used in the Scriptures.

The prophet Nahum says (i. 5), "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, *yea, the world and all that dwell therein.*" The orientals did not govern their imagination by the same taste which controls our own.* It would be extravagant now to say, when a believer receives assistance from God, that the Lord surrounds himself with devouring fire, and comes down for his assistance; and that the earth shakes and trembles, and the foundations of the hills are moved from their place. But it is precisely in this manner that David describes his own deliverance, in the 18th Psalm. God is called a consuming fire. (Heb. xii. 29.) The mountains are said to melt or dissolve at his presence, and the earth to melt also when he utters his voice. (Judges v. 5; Ps. xli. 6.) It is also said in Deuteronomy (xxxii. 22-25), when the judgment of God is threatened upon the Israelites if they prove rebellious, that a fire will be kindled in the anger of God which will burn unto the lowest hell, and consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. There is no language in the New Testament stronger than this; and yet it is explained immediately in the context to mean that the prosperity of the people would be destroyed, and that there would be no place of safety for them. Even in the invisible world no deliverance from the divine anger would be experienced. "They shall be *burnt with hunger,*" it is said; and various particular descriptions of the miseries

* There can scarcely be said to be any rule of taste. The Roman writer, Plautus, uses an image not dissimilar to that which is so common in the oriental style of the Bible. "If you continue as you are doing, you will cause the conflagration of your family (the ruin of it), and then, in consequence, you will want water to quench the fire of your family." — "Trinummus" of Plautus.

which they would experience, by wars and dispersions, when they should forsake the Lord, are given.

We must be convinced, therefore, that the mere declaration that the earth will melt with fervent heat, and be consumed, is not necessarily to be taken in its literal import. The prophet Nahum, as well as Moses, uses the same image, with all its boldness, which is used in the New Testament; and this prophet carries the conception further than Peter, and tells us that the earth and all its inhabitants are burned up or consumed at the presence of the Lord. The Saviour is spoken of, in the same manner as Jehovah, in the Old Testament, as coming with flaming and devouring fire. As the representative of the Father, his presence is described with all that majesty which characterizes the descriptions of the Old Testament.

We might, even from the explanation of the figures in which the second coming is described, have already had occasion to suspect that the conflagration of the earth and of the heavens is entirely of a figurative nature. Peter speaks of the subject with great caution, as we have already had occasion to observe, and refers his readers to Paul for further assistance upon the subject. It is clear that the prophets of the New Testament were not above their brethren of the former dispensation, as to a comprehension of their prophetic messages. Paul and Peter both inform us that they uttered mysteries. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part," is a declaration of the apostle Paul; and it is a confession of his imperfect acquaintance with the subjects of his predictions. And how important is the declaration, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.) The apostle expected that, on the second coming of Christ, the mysteries which he contem-

plated would be revealed by the events themselves. And it is, in fact, upon this principle that we have attained the solution of the prophecies to which he refers. We have seen what the resurrection and the judgment *must be*, in order to have occurred at the commencement of the Christian age.

And we may have the most satisfactory evidence that the conflagration of the earth and of the heavens is a figurative event. The conflagration of the world was itself to occur at the second coming of Christ, and at the same time with the other events of the judgment and resurrection. (1 Cor. iii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 12; 2 Thess i. 7, 8.) We must, of necessity, then, believe that all these events were contemporaneous; and the conflagration must be explained, therefore, upon some other principle than that of a literal combustion.

And has not the world been, as a matter of fact, or in effect, a sea of fire? Have not the fires of human passions and of the divine anger burned on the earth — which is (the earth) a well-known prophetic symbol of people — and in the heavens, the figurative church or state? And what image could more fitly designate the revolutions and passions of the world than fire? What has been more fervid and consuming than ambition? And the passions of the world have also acted as its purifying agents. They have taught great lessons to mankind, not easily forgotten; and it is a consolation to know that the conflagration which has rolled its waves over the world, and into the skies, will finally exhaust its materials; and that the human heart, renovated by the Gospel, and instructed by these examples, will realize the perfection which, under the image of new heavens and of a new earth wherein righteousness would dwell, is so glowingly predicted in the Scriptures.

Peter teaches us that "the new heavens and the new earth" would immediately succeed the final conflagration. (2 Pet. iii. 13.) It must have begun, therefore, like all the other events belonging to this bundle of prophecies, at the commencement of the Christian age. And John, in the Revelations, consistently invites the men of his time to drink of the water of life which belonged to the renovated condition.

We are, then, living in the age of the renovation; in the earlier periods of that great and perfected state of man upon earth, which is so many times said to be forever and everlasting.* We live in the period when two great powers are struggling for the victory: and our age may justly be regarded as belonging to that of the conflagration, — perhaps to be hereafter signalized by a more remarkable event of this kind. We are living when Christ may be said to reign over his enemies; when human passions, when ambition, and scepticism, and false religion, work the overthrow of those who indulge them, or are subject to them. Ambition, and depravity of every description, less and less command the approbation of men. Some glimmerings of that age when "charity" will be held in universal esteem, and will never fail, have certainly reached us. Very different powers are, however, now struggling. But the victory will at length be accomplished; and the ruins and wastes of sin, like the debris of ancient mountains, will constitute the basis upon which the kingdom of God will repose, and the soil from which the beauty and abundance of perpetual generations will spring.

The end of the world is not, therefore, foretold in Scripture. We do not know that there will ever be any end; but the successions of generations may continue forever,

* Dan. ii. 44; vii. 27; Luke i. 33; John xii. 34; Rev. xi. 15.

and the peopling of the universe go on without cessation. The duration of the world was in the Old Testament used as a measure of eternity. Both were interminable. The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but it will be by their disintegration through the action of frosts and rain, and by their removal for the use of man. When John, therefore, in his matchless prophecy, establishes the kingdom of Christ, or the commencement of the Christian age; and when the enemies of the Cross, as they successively arise, are appointed to destruction, and finally consumed; and when he depicts the glory of the world in its renovated state, when death and weeping and sorrow are virtually no more; he allows this happy state, for which all things in all ages were preparing, to go on without any indication of its termination.

In the prophecy respecting the new heavens in Isaiah, the succession of generations was to continue, and death itself as a natural event. There would be no more, it is said, in that renovated state, an infant of days, nor an old man that had not filled his days; for the child should die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old should be accursed. Building houses and planting vineyards are referred to, and the peace and virtue of the people are particularly described. (Is. lxx. 17-25.)

We have already noticed, in the examination of the prophecies relating to the coming of Christ, that the heavens are a symbol of powers. The heavens and the earth were to be destroyed at Christ's coming; and these were the Jewish church and nation, and the heathen or unchristian world, whose destruction was to be more gradually accomplished. The new heavens and the new earth could be nothing else, therefore, than a new church and a new people, or a new and more perfect religious dispensation.

While, therefore, there can be no doubt whatever that the expressions new heavens and new earth belong to that sublime species of imagery by which the divine wisdom saw fit obscurely to denote to past ages the wonderful blessings of future times, it is at the same time possible that some of the passages which relate to this subject require something of a literal explanation.

While fire is an undoubted symbol of the divine presence, and especially of the divine judgments, and while the second coming of Christ was to be attended with flaming fire, and the world was then to be burned, fire has been a powerful agent in affecting the physical character of our globe; and its agencies are still at work. Those vast areas which are sinking or rising, as in Polynesia, Greenland, Sweden, and South America, have been ascribed to volcanic agencies. It is certainly not impossible that great changes may take place, through the course of many centuries, and acting gradually upon particular parts of the globe, by means of these agents. Fiery agencies appear also to be at work in the unknown regions of space, as the remarkable and temporary brilliancy of some stars would seem to denote. Perhaps the two following passages require in some degree a literal explanation.

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.” (Ps. cii. 25-28.)

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like

smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." (Is. li. 6.)

We are sufficiently aware of the fact that Eastern imagery is not regulated by principles exactly like our own, to be warned not to take poetic passages, as these are, just as they would be taken in our own language, or written for our own time. Besides, they are prophetic, and may be allowed to add the symbolical character of prophecy.

But the statements of these passages are themselves sufficient to show an important qualification of their meaning. When the Psalmist says, "they shall perish," he immediately adds, in one of those qualifying declarations which are well known to characterize Hebrew poetry, "Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." He means, therefore, by perishing, the change or extinction of the outward form of the earth. That this is the meaning, whether the idea is literal altogether or tropical in part, is still further apparent, by the declaration (v. 28) that, although the earth would wax old like a garment, generations of mankind would still continue to follow each other upon it. The psalmist contemplates in this psalm the brevity of his life. And he puts this short period in contrast with the eternity of God, and with the antiquity of the globe. Everything appears to him perishable, or changeable, but God. The earth or the land had changed, and was changeable. Man came and departed in successive generations. Still, however changeable might be the world or humanity, generations of men would still continue on the earth. "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Isaiah, in a

similar manner, says that "the salvation of God is forever, and that his righteousness shall not be abolished." These passages, then, so apparently contradictory of other passages of Scripture, teach an opposite doctrine to that of the final destruction of the earth and the extinction of its generations. We perceive again, therefore, the necessity of studying with care the singular declarations of Scripture.

The earth undergoes changes, visible to the eye, and which are much more apparent by contemplating any great stretch of time. It is a fact that the earth grows old, and demands the renewal of the elements of its soils. The image of an old garment may be strikingly applied to Palestine, in which the psalmist wrote, and which perhaps he principally intended; and not less to regions like Assyria and Babylonia. Fertility has fled where once there was abundance; and the Bedouin wanders and pitches his tent, in a vagabond life, in regions once abounding with inhabitants and with wealth. The splendid palaces of Assyria are mountains of dust. The glory of Egypt and of Greece has departed, and nations no longer tremble at the Roman name. The treasures of antiquity have poured into the lap of the Scythian; and out of the ruins of the world that was they have composed monuments more durable and more glorious than ever adorned the Greek or Roman name. Shakspeare has ascended higher than Homer. Bacon has far surpassed Aristotle in utility. And Newton has reduced to a cipher all the combined glories of ancient physical science. The earth, too, increases in fertility under the power of superior art and virtue. New England, with its mountains and barren soil, is virtually a richer land to-day than Egypt under its nourishing Nile and powerful Pharaohs. And England, the land of "the unkempt savage," and the land of the fiery Gaul, are

gardens of beauty and abundance, such as the Babylonian and Assyrian scarcely ever beheld.

The heavens and the earth have alike changed. Abraham, and the pious of former times, looked upon the same sky, they saw the same stars and planets, and the same earth, as we see. But the heavens, which we now behold, have been rendered, by the extraordinary discoveries of science, entirely new. We do not look upon the blue arch of heaven scattered over merely with stars, but view it as filled with innumerable worlds. We cannot recognize in the history or science of the past the world of the ancients. The earth has expanded in dimensions; the terrors and mysteries of the ocean have departed, and there is no more sea.* Astronomy, chemistry, geology, and their associate sciences, have re-created the world. Christianity has spread a still newer and more beautiful charm over the world. There are new heavens and a new earth; and, in a degree lower, indeed, than will hereafter be realized, but still in a real degree, righteousness is the crown of the change.

It would be wrong to omit one decisive proof of the perpetuity of the earth. God declared to Noah that he would not "any more" smite every living thing as he had done. (Gen. viii. 21, 22.) That we are not to restrict this statement to a destruction by water, is clear, since it was said that "while the earth remaineth," or the body of the planet continues, seed-time and harvest should not cease.

* This is not to be taken as a complete explanation of the prophetic conception of "the sea."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD IN THE CONCEALMENT OF THESE SUBJECTS.

Christianity in the State of a Germ in an Unfavorable Soil, at its Commencement. — Singular and Foretold Providence of God regarding it. — Slowness of Heart of the Disciples. — Providential Direction of the Mind to the Importance of Just Principles of Biblical Explanation. — State of the Church upon the Decease of the Apostles. — Reversion of the Mind to the Proper Genius of Christianity. — Great Benefits, on this account, of the Imaginary Investments of the Second Coming. — Grossness and Superstition of the World. — Success attending the Divine Method in the Remarkable Victories of Christianity. — The Obscurities of the Second Coming a Preventive of Greater Darkness. — A Glance at more Recent Times as Explanatory of this Subject. — The Subjects which have occupied Christian Attention. — Persecution in the Name of Christ. — Dogmatical Christianity. — The Religion of Humanity. — Reformatory Nature of Christianity. — Mistakes upon this Subject. — “The Sword ;” — its Image.

HAVING pursued these meditations, we will, before touching the extreme point of our labors, seek some explanation of the general concealment of these subjects for so long a time.

It is evident that Christianity appeared at its birth, like the patriarchal and Jewish religions, as a germ which was progressively to develop, as the facts of the ancient dispensation came forth successively in increasing splendor, by the revelations of the prophets. Then, it was by inspiration ; now, it is by a study of the Scriptures, with the aid

of science and the better known principles of reasoning, that religious truth is unfolded. Christianity, at its birth, revealed to the actual comprehension only a small portion of its glory. Indeed, it was a child born of the ancient dispensation, and caught up in mystery to heaven, — as John very plainly denotes, in his apocalyptic vision, — on account of the investments of error in which it would have been arrayed, to come down, doubtless, imperceptibly again to the world. John relates the seizure and removal of the child, and leaves us, in the progress of the narrative, to infer only its return. (Rev. xii. 1–6.)

But we may ask, why was a faith which was to constitute the last object of man's religious attention, and was to become the final instrument of his progress, involved in so much mystery at its origin? Why was not the doctrine of the Saviour's coming, and of the ends of his kingdom, as we have now satisfactorily ascertained them from the Scriptures, fully developed to the infant church, and to the apostles, who aspired to a complete knowledge of these subjects? We are aware that the question must be involved in some obscurity, as an attempt to explain the providence of God in regard to a very long period of time might be expected to be. We are told, however, that the ignorance of the disciples upon this subject was owing in part to their hardness of heart. This would not apply to them, however, as regards this subject in all its extent, unless we regarded them only as a part of the whole primitive and early Christian church; since it required the events themselves, which the disciples did not live to see, to elucidate the case. Those who survived the apostles, however, must have seen the inconsistency of believing that events were still to come which were to arrive before the apostolic age expired; and to them must apply the charge of slowness of

heart, and which was productive of a darkness which has been transmitted to our own times. We will follow this clue in considering the general question of the concealment of these subjects.

It cannot be doubted that a better knowledge of the principles of biblical interpretation would have rendered these subjects plainer in earlier, as well as in more recent times. But there are many subjects, besides these particular ones, which require a knowledge of the just principles of biblical interpretation, as well as an exemption from prejudice, for their solution. There are many subjects which lie as obscurely in the public mind as those of the resurrection and judgment, and the coming of Christ. Nor will it be doubted that the study of the Bible is a difficult branch of labor, even quite aside from the prejudices which becloud it. In the two or three first centuries, the real attainments in religious knowledge, beyond the simple elements of Christianity, were mean; and the extraordinary errors which were mingled with the truth, and which were zealously defended as a part of its substance, show even a contemptible acquaintance with the system of revelation. In the first century, inspiration scarcely restrained the wildness of interpretation; and, when the apostles had gone, it broke out in the utmost diversity and folly among private men and "fathers." Nothing is more melancholy than the history of Christianity, or as we should rather say of the church, as it descended from these spurious sources, down to the time of the Reformation. The church became a monster, scarcely distinguishable as having any mark of true religion.*

* Many readers can scarcely be acquainted with the rapid decline of pure Christianity soon after the death of the apostles. Paul had predicted that fatal errors would arise in the church of Ephesus, and had

Now, the obscurity resting upon a subject of such interest as the coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom, and a subject so complex, and involved with such apparently discrepant declarations, and plunged in still deeper mystery by the Apocalypse of John, was calculated to call the attention strongly to a minute and careful study of the Scriptures ; and, in fact, the subject occupied no small part of the labors of the first periods of the church. It cannot be doubted that the wildness of the first ages upon this subject, and the crude opinions of some of the "fathers" upon it, bordering now and then upon singular correctness, have been an impressive lesson to Christians and critics in modern times, and have restrained the license of interpretation respecting it. Besides, some of the most instructive and suggestive labors of modern critical research have been devoted to this very subject. We need but refer

admonished the churches more generally upon this subject. All these errors, in their original forms, have, perhaps, not come down to us ; but enough have survived to justify the predictions of the apostle. It is unnecessary to recur to the sects, whose name was legion, which were deemed heretical by Catholic Christians ; the Catholic church itself abundantly verifies these prophecies. Indeed, the only wonder is, where the true church could be found amid this chaos of errors. It certainly could not be found purely alone, under any name, or in any existing body. Nor were the errors which sprung up immediately after the death of the apostles merely philosophical, but some of them struck at the very root of practical Christianity. The absurd fables of the Shepherd of Hermas show that pious frauds, or false pretensions to inspiration, were not deemed incompatible with Christian duty — an idea which was very much improved upon afterwards. The ascetic spirit, or the substitution of austerities for faith, began early to undermine the true doctrine of justification ; and purgatory was early derived or supported from Plato, who became the fashionable philosopher, so to speak, of the church. To trace the rise and progress of error further, would be to write the history of the Roman apostasy, into which Christianity for the most part sunk a few centuries after the death of the apostles. Where, then, we may ask, with Fuller, was the true church of Christ, all this time ?

to Mede, Michaelis, Sir Isaac Newton, Warburton, and Stuart, to show the fact, or how the labors of hermeneutical study have been stimulated by the ever-recurring and seemingly ever-multiplying perplexities of the subject, and of the general subjects of related prophecy. We have ascertained, then, one valuable end of the dubiousness of this singular mystery; that is, the stimulus which it has afforded to biblical criticism.

But let us revert again to the primitive age. The disciples earnestly desired to know the times and the seasons. But their curiosity was immediately and decisively repelled by the declaration that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons which the Father had put in his own power; but they were assured that they should receive power to be witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem and throughout the world. (Acts i. 7, 8.)

It is obvious that there must have been some urgent reasons for investing this subject with so much obscurity; nor can it be presumptuous to inquire what they were. We know the ignorance of the disciples respecting the real nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and the persistency of their earthly conceptions respecting it. Nor do we have only a faint discernment of the pertinacity of their views in the fact that they were perpetuated among the "fathers" of the two or three first centuries, who thought, like the disciples, that they should sow and reap and live under their own vines and fig-trees upon this regenerated earth.

Now, besides the fact that it is not easy to correct powerful misconceptions, we see how vast was the interest which the second coming of Christ possessed in the hearts of the disciples. We see this interest, rising to the pitch of enthusiasm, in the epistles. Nor would it have been in any way diminished by more explicit declarations respecting

the real nature and the real facts of the event. We can easily see that it would have been heightened; only it would have fixed upon different events, and have been transferred to different scenes from this world.

But how vacant might have been the minds of the disciples of the real genius of Christianity, when a subject so stupendous filled their minds! The grandeur of the subject would have been likely to have overpowered every other, and the real interests of religion.

We can easily see that putting the coming of Christ in greater remoteness, and investing it with deeper mystery, as was done with particular care by the Saviour himself, necessarily concentrated the attention of the disciples upon the facts of the Saviour's life, and upon the spiritual nature of Christianity. We see this action in a perverted shape, when the church of the first centuries strove to turn their attention from dogmas to the cultivation of a spirit which was too barren of real virtues, and which became ascetic and gloomy. What filled the minds of the disciples when they contemplated the second coming was images—splendid, awful, to be sure, but still images. Their minds, as we have seen, strove to penetrate their significance in vain. There lay before them some stupendous event, awful as regarded its effects upon the rebellious part of the Jewish nation, and hopeful and blissful as it respected the true believer. But, while this great mystery lay impenetrable before them, the mind could turn upon the substantial and brilliant and persuasive facts of the Saviour's life and practical instructions. And here, perforce, they turned their most earnest attention. The Saviour significantly added to the declaration, that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons; that they should receive power from the Holy Ghost, and be witnesses of himself in Jerusalem

and in all the world. It was a powerful enforcement of their teachings, when they accompanied them with miraculous powers; and the stimulus of an event not very distant was sufficient to support their courage and zeal.

If the disciples needed to fix their own attention upon the spiritual nature of Christianity, the world did not need it less. Its conceptions were still more gross, and were material, and highly superstitious. It was soured with bigotry, and bewildered with a narrow and proud philosophy. Some mystery, as well as transparent conceptions of genuine virtue, were needed, to break up this condition of human nature. And as a matter of fact — in which we can perceive evidence of the divine wisdom — this result was in an extraordinary decree accomplished. Pagan superstition, philosophical schools, and Jewish bigotry, in a few centuries fell before the genius of Christianity. Let us not complain, then, of the obscurity which was allowed to rest upon the second coming, or of the impenetrable drapery — so brilliant — with which it was invested; since we owe to these causes the victory over pagan darkness and superstition.

But let us carry the case into remoter, or bring it into still nearer times. It is impossible that the human mind, which, not long after the apostolic age, turned its attention to all points of Christian inquiry with such extraordinary vigor, should not have busied itself more with the state which succeeds this life, had the real doctrine of the Saviour's coming been explicitly revealed. A real bodily resurrection, invisible to the eye, or not taking place in this world, would have furnished a tempting subject of inquiry, which would not have been unpursued.

It is conceivable that, with the narrow views of the genius of religion which prevailed in those times, and with

the philosophical investments which were ever ready to be cast over all Christian subjects, and with the profound obscurity in which all astronomical truths lay, wrong opinions would vastly have prevailed over the true. How much reason have we for profound gratitude, that the doctrine of heaven was not dragged through the mire of patristical invention; that this home of the saints, this final resting-place of redeemed and tempted man, was preserved free from unhallowed touch; that God preserved a great power, greater than any other, to rouse the church effectually in a future age to the powers of a future and everlasting life! This is one of the great leaves of the book which was to be unfolded in another age; — another of the seven thunders which was to arouse the world, and to fit it for the everlasting dominion of the Son of God.

As it was, the second coming was a mystery too profound for the unlimited license of speculation. Awful and fiery grandeurs were hung about the portals of the subject, and all was uncertain and impenetrable depth beyond. After some earnest attention, after some wildness of fancy, the subject, with a few transmutations, which have lived in their full vigor up to the present day, was abandoned as a matter of philosophical, or we might say even of intellectual attention, and resigned to faith and feeling.

“Fathers,” too, if they could not have found worlds for the redeemed in the soberness of astronomical teachings, would have been likely to have found them in their invention, and to have peopled them at their pleasure; and an obstacle might have been raised to astronomical studies which would have hampered the free and noble spirit of Newton, and burnt Galileo at the stake, or retained him in his prison, if the light of this noble genius could have broken through the darkness which would have existed. Mathe-

matics would have been a terror which every devout Christian would have shunned.

But let us come a little nearer to recent times, and even venture to step within them. No just conception of the facts of Christian history can enable us to avoid the judgment that external or what may be called denominational Christianity has in nearly every age of the church — it will be conceded, to an appalling extent — risen much above Christianity itself, and everywhere struggled with it. The church has been the monster which has devoured the offspring which only it could legitimately produce. It has buried in dungeons or hidden in obscurity, and solemnly exorcised, the spirit which should have animated it.

Let us contemplate the subjects which have stood prominent in Christian inquiry. What have they been? With what subjects has ecclesiastical history been filled? We must have a definite conception of Christ, of his life, and of his personal teachings. A light like that cannot be hid in a corner, and must break through the obscurest mist which philosophy and tradition can gather upon it. Guileless, good, full of compassion for ignorant and suffering humanity, earnest in a scale out of the range where men are stimulated with ambition, transcendent in precepts which manifestly realize the perfection of moral instruction, and with a sweep of comprehension which exhausts the wants of human nature, and, as we have seen, the economy of the creation, he is the light of the world, — its great, its real benefactor, — the way, the truth, and the life. But we can with difficulty recognize the religion of Christ as it professes to be reproduced in conflicts of philosophical opinion, in abstractions, in wire-drawn conceptions, in monkery, in celibacy, in papal power and apostolic succession. Yet for these has the fire of the stake been kindled,

and inquisitorial torture been applied. Men, who have professed to be the successors, and who have claimed to be the only representatives in the world, of Him who prayed for his enemies, have fired the fagots of the martyr with diabolical vengeance. By some artful transmutation, the malignant crowd, which insulted the expiring agonies of the Son of God, have been transformed, upon the page of history, into the church of God! "Depart from me!" must be the language of the Son of God, very frequently reäpplied; "I know you not."

But let us step further — within the consecrated veil of the Reformation; since Luther has opened the door of evangelical Christianity. Surely here religious intolerance, if it has in a measure lost the prestiges and power of the Papacy, has too often only hidden under the cap of the university, or distilled in malignant drops from the pen of the controversialist, perhaps of the ambitious aspirant. The Reformation has not been without its sickening list of philosophical dogmas. Too prominent, it will be admitted, has dogmatical Christianity prevailed, in pulpit, and press, and private conference, over "the faith which saves," and the Christianity of the heart. A portion of the modern age has been heated, and even enkindled to civil strife, by forms of Christian government or Christian polity.

But we will not rend the veil of this sad history. We would quench, rather than revive, the embers which are still alive. We will not ask how men have been saved in the fires of religious conflict, or when kindled with the animosities of denominational zeal. The case has been bad, all will freely admit. But how much worse would it have been, had no dread mysteries of religion, like the omens in ancient warfare, diverted the mind from matters of too zealous and curious interest, and divided its attention with

better things! Death has stood before the religious combatant, and turned the edge of his spirit, and broken the slender but terrible web of the metaphysical-religious philosopher's dreams. Happy ignorance of the future, which has saved the purity of the church, and held it back from the abyss of fatalism, or the mire of a mundane Christianity! The haughty spirit of Cromwell even cowered before the invisible terrors of the grave.

But one more step, as explanatory of the wisdom of God — a step somewhat beyond the pale of a recognizable Christianity; and yet comparatively how much! Is it a fact that men are prepared now, while they ask for a greater invigoration of Christian truth — prepared fully for the general comprehension and reception of the pure genius of Christianity — for the leaven which will by its natural process transmute the lump? Have they ascended above the dreams of a mundane religion; and are they ready to look not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal? Or, does the terrestrial kingdom of Jew and of "fathers" abide with them still?

There is unquestionably a dubious and alarming look with which modern Christianity turns its face upon us. We hear of inaugurations of humanity, whose "maturity steam and press are hurrying on," with its cloak of religion, and its "abysses of infidelity and atheism lingering behind." These are a manifest farce or tragedy, inscribed with the name of "progress," and stepping on the stage, not with the leaven of the Gospel, but with the nostrum of "socialism" and "spiritualism," and of every variety of reform. This human and warlike religion hides its real mundane aspect under the mask of genuine charity. It is

charity becoming earthly and sensual under the badge of "humanity."

We must ever welcome any genuine reform. We must rejoice when men really throw off any of the shackles which fetter them. Religion must be the parent of all practicable and beneficial reforms. Its path is marked with all the evidences of progress. Since its sun ascended with the earliest beginning of the Reformation, the conceptions of press and steam and telegraph have dropped from its beams. It has begotten the physical sciences in the human mind. The angel of peace has attended commerce and true religion.

But is not reform a too favorite theme of the Christian pulpit and press? Let us ask with what hope of purity the church can move within the borders of the Stygian pool of politics? Reforms may be desirable in all directions. It is human to err. But, if the pulpit concerns itself too nearly with the organizations and the arts of society, may it not be to the detriment of its nobler calling?

We do not suppose that the real Christian pulpit will extensively or long advocate the direct and unscrupulous reforms, which borrow their powers from religion, rather than constitute a part of its substance; which overstep into the prerogative of Providence, and which are pursued upon the quixotic idea that they can immediately or directly chase those evils, dyed in the wool in human nature, from the world. But does it not step too nearly upon the dangerous borders of this false Christianity, which an apostle delineated in characters applying to his own time? (1 Tim. vi. 1-7.) Does it not watch too narrowly, with too *professional* an interest, the political measures and movements of the age, in which one part of mankind are struggling for power, and another part, often vainly, struggling for a tem-

poral freedom? We fear that the judgment must be that it does; that it draws over itself and its functions too much the powers of the state; that it oversteps the proper limits of an institution of Christ.

The pulpit has its peculiar and undivided province, and it deals with powers. Its invisibly working leaven is mightier than the forces of revolution. It has overthrown and made kingdoms. It has not worked underneath them with levers, and raised them up and toppled them down. It has done it as the light rises in the morning, and rules the world with imperceptible powers. The mission of Christianity is not crusades against power; is not the study of political theory; is not even social reform, as always an immediate effect; but is the law of faith and love. We concede the delicacy of this subject. We know how nice a thread of distinction must be run between the man a Christian and the man a citizen of the state.

But we invoke the attention of the church to the incomparable preponderance of the Christian's hope of heaven and concern with immortality over the evil and seemingly incurable maladies of time. We invoke it to consider the prerogative of the providence of God, — its unfailing care of the church, and its control over the movements and measures of the world. The state is remote from the church. It is like an earthly thing, grovelling, sensual, and how often devilish! Let not the church of God wed itself with it, and defile its glory and poison its substance in the odor and contagion of its presence. Let men there ruffle, aspire, and die; the Christian and the church have a hope full of immortality. Let the church win the world to itself, as it will in time. Let it raise and animate its aim to all Christian heights, and it will at present prove too truly how distant the world and the time are from the con-

ception and the reach of the hope full of heaven. When the problem of Huguenot and Puritan is solved, the judgment may be that they touched the prohibited sword ! Let not a prudent and believing church tempt its destructive edge. But the *image* of the sword, or political religion, cuts as keenly, and is as two-edged — wounding, if not destroying the user — as the steel itself.

If we have offended any honest and sensitive mind, — if we have trodden upon a path of delicate and nice distinction, — we have, at least, shown or suggested a fact too true, that “sight” above “faith” is the inverted order of too much that bears the Christian name at present. And we have, it is hoped, without presumption, shown some advantage which may accrue, in the providence of God, by the remarkable mystery which has invested the doctrine of the second coming of Christ and of his kingdom. These subjects are a great power to lift the church from a mundane to a spiritual Christianity. They are, at least, some of the final powers reserved to perfect the Christian hope and life. What manner of persons does it become us to be, with such hopes and expectations, in all holy conversation and godliness !

With these observations, we proceed to our final and more pleasant task.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TERMINATION OF EVIL, AND THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. — CONCLUSION. — THE DESTINY OF MAN.

The Problem involved with the Origin of Evil. — The Origin and Design. — Truth of the Calvinistic Explanation. — Evidence of the Perfection of this Design. — Virtue and Truth Relative and Progressive Conceptions. — This Progressiveness Independent of the Loss of the Original Innocence. — Evil an INSTITUTION, that the Universe might attain its Perfection through Sufferings. — The Necessity of such an Institution, in View of another and Worse Alternative. — Huygens. — Particular Scriptural Confirmations. — Proof from a Great Fact. — The Perfection of the Plan justified by its Working. — The Ultimate Perfection as Certain as the Progressive has been. — THE TRUE NOTION OF OUR MORAL CONDITION. — God Manifested, as a Sharer of our Humanity's Woes, in Human Flesh. — Just Explanation of Calvin. — CONCLUSION. — The Theological School of New Haven ; — its Great Theological Conjecture. — When the Remoter Creation began to be Peopled. — Universal Dominion of Mankind. — The Omens of this Destiny. — " All Things purged by Fire." — Penetration of the Scriptures further than the Glass of the Astronomer. — The Histories of the Celestial Inhabitants begun on Earth. — Human Experience a Stepping-stone to Heaven. — Wonders and Perfection of the Plan. — The Archetypal Perfection of Man. — The Son of God. — The Church the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all. — Glory to God in the Highest !

IN bringing our labors to their conclusion, the subject of evil, as was noticed in the former part of this work, becomes so essentially involved in the result, that we must

take at this point a brief but sufficient glance at the subject, and conclude with a view of the general result.

The long-perplexed subject of evil presents us with the double problem of its origin, and of the wisdom which has permitted its existence and continuance.

And let not the reader be alarmed at the brief consideration of a subject so essential to an intelligent understanding of the plan of the creation, and which is dry only as pursued in metaphysical methods. Our labor has consisted of various steps, each one of which has given us a new and higher view of the plan of the creation; and the last will now conduct us to a point where our view will be more extensive and complete. And wonderful, indeed, must be the conviction that facts can carry us so high that we can look from the foundations of nature to the accomplishment of its purpose. One more vigorous effort, and we have attained this height.

As we have seen, by a historical and matter-of-fact view of the case, by a method, in short, in which all philosophy is founded, evil had its actual birth in the weakness of a creature which was to learn and to derive its wisdom from experience, and which, in the design of God, — clearly expressed as antecedent both the fall and the creation (Eph. i. 4; Rev. xiii. 8; 1 Peter i. 19, 20), — was to ascend, from the first embryo-dawn of a humanity made in the image of God, to the higher and voluntary possession of the divine likeness. We are renewed by the Gospel, that we may become “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter i. 4.)

This is the real state of the case as a matter of fact, and as regards its general inception in the divine mind. It would be a preposterous conception that the fall of Adam

changed the divine plan, and that the Creator has been forced to perfect a system out of the wrecks of the apostasy, instead of beginning anew. Calvin very justly maintains that God has not merely permitted the existence of evil, but that it is a part of His plan. Although this idea may be taken in too abstract a form, and carried out in pernicious applications, it must be admitted to be just.*

God is not the author of sin, however, because he instituted a system which should begin in weakness and evil. The material creation itself did not originate in a state of perfection, but was carried through many processes which now present to us relatively the character of evils; and God may be regarded as their author, since they were absolutely in his power. Still, moral evil is more an evil than natural evil; but God is not its author, any more than he is the author of the measures necessary to carry out his plan. God did not certainly compel Adam to sin, and he was not the author of the volition in which Adam sinned. Moral evil was necessarily involved in his want of experience; and it is absurd to speak of God as the author of Adam's inexperience. Still, if it is said that evil came into existence fortuitously, and that God has indifferently, or by necessitation, taken it into his plan, we may deny anything so inconsistent with the divine power and wisdom at once, and reply to the case in the plain language of the Scriptures, "I form light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." (Is. xlv. 7.) But, aside from the divine purpose, the fact is clear that evil originated in the necessity of experience in a voluntary being.

Any abstract or *a priori* speculation upon this subject,

* Institutes, B. III.

of which character the attempts to explain it have generally been, must necessarily in some degree contemplate man as he is; and the attempts have necessarily been abortive, from the mixture of two incompatible elements, facts and fancies, and abortive as well from the utter impossibility of reaching abstractly all those possible forms in which a creation of moral beings might have been made, but of which Omniscience alone can conceive. If we examine the facts in the case, as relate to the history of its birth, and as respect the divine purpose regarding it, we have the only explanation of evil attainable, and the true explanation, that is, of evil as it actually is.

The question whether God could have made a creation in which moral evil would not have had an existence, possesses no practical utility whatever, or scarcely any. It is not necessary, in order to prove the goodness of God; for the facts presented to our minds in the present system of things will prove quite sufficient for the purpose. It is unnecessary to ask whether God could, or could not, have made a material creation different from the present, or whether he could have made the earth at once, without any process. But, whatever the Creator might have done, it is very clear that unless free moral agents could have been made *with* experience, and with *intuitive* knowledge, no other system essentially could have been produced than that which now exists. It is, as we have seen, altogether a gratuitous assumption that angels have not been carried through an experience at all analogous to the case of man. It is said of the Saviour himself that "he learned *obedience* by the things which he suffered." (Heb. v. 8.) And when the tempter urged the consideration to seduce our first parents, that they would be as gods, knowing good and evil,—and the word gods (*elohim*), as the Saviour has taught us, is

applied to creatures (John x. 35*), — we may infer the fact that the instruction of evil was not unknown beyond this world, and that the “*elohim*” or angels of heaven were practically acquainted with it. It is said in the book of Job, that “the heavens are not clean in his sight.” (xv. 15.) Many religious conceptions, in fact, have been derived from a very limited range of evidence. The very fact that some angels are called elect, while others fell, and that a judgment of angels is spoken of, would suggest the idea of probation among them, and that evil existed in their experience.† But, unless mankind could have been created without moral forces, but with instincts no more moral than those which cause the bird to fly and to select its food, the present system was preferable to all others conceivable by us; and when we contemplate the stupendous results which are to issue in it, we have evidence that no other could have been chosen equally good.

A very interesting evidence that evil possesses only a relative, and we might with some qualification say an incidental character, is afforded in the development of truth and virtue in the world. Both have developed. Virtue has: for many things which the conscience did not condemn in the time of Abraham, as scarcely any one needs to be informed, are condemned now. Polygamy and slavery were moral evils then, if we view them in relation with the ideas and customs which prevail at the present time. Society certainly could not have been perfect at that time, and the standard of individual perfection was comparatively low.

But truth of every kind is not an aggregation of inde-

* Ps. xxix. 1; lxxxix. 6. In these instances, “mighty” is in the original Hebrew “*elohim*.”

† 1 Tim. v. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 3; Jude 6.

pendent items ; it is an inseparable whole. A system of partial instruction must be attended with some evil, by disengaging with some violence one part of the web of truth from another. To take one example only. After the patriarchal ages, "the law" instituted a new and much needed system of instruction. Its design was evidently to impress, in its greatest power, the idea of obligation. The measure was partial and transient ; and where the effect was not good, it was unquestionably evil. It was attended with the unfortunate result of imparting an apparent harshness to the divine nature, which hardened many minds, and led them to take refuge in idolatry, as well as produced those narrow conceptions of religion which prevailed with scribe and Pharisee in a later age. The Bible expressly says that statutes were given the people "that were not good," "and judgments whereby they should not live." (Ezek. xx. 25.) We do not, however, regard it as an evil in any absolute form, that children conceive objects to be exactly as they appear. The rose appears to be colored in itself, rather than to derive its hue from the action of the solar light. Nor are we able altogether to avoid the deception of appearances. We say every day that the sun rises and sets. The fact, therefore, that truth has been developed in a partial and disrupted manner, although it has been productive of evil, has, nevertheless, been evil only in a relative form. The character of good men in past ages, although called perfect, falls far short of perfection by our standards, and was relative only.

It is manifest, therefore, that error or evil is attendant upon the progress of knowledge, and would have been inseparable from it in a state of complete innocence. Error becomes *moral* evil when applied to the passions ; and the necessity of instruction and experience in the first beings

chiefly related to this case. Passion is even more blind than the reason. Adam, it is obvious, fell from an excess of passion, — from its superiority over his reason. It is obvious, therefore, that perfection in an absolute sense he did not possess. He was inexperienced, and had yet to acquire the knowledge and practice of self-government. The loss which the Scriptures narrate was not a loss of perfection, which Adam never had, but a loss of *innocence* and the favor of God. Adam lost his innocence; and, upon this sacrifice, was immediately cut off from that great destiny which would have been directly before him, if he had been capable of a complete regulation of his passions.

It is remarkable that the idea of an absolute perfection of the Adamic state has not surprised those who have carelessly advocated it with the unfortunate inference, or rather fact, which it would establish, that absolute moral perfection is not a security to innocence in the creature; and that the creation may, since it can never be more than absolutely perfect, fall at any time from its highest state of moral perfection. In what way, therefore, will the Creator preserve the purity of his empire, except by sweeping from existence the creatures which he has made? The moral creation must, upon such an hypothesis, be a system of never-ceasing hazards, its stability an accident, and the fact of its absolute security — if such is attainable — hung merely upon the divine foreknowledge.

This strange hypothesis, also, which has long pervaded all our theological literature, makes the perfection of the Adamic state an instinct, since it was not acquired by voluntary conduct. But instinct is not worthy of rewards; nor is there anything suggestive of an instinctive moral character in Adam, in the fact that God addressed a command and motives to him.

The origin of evil, however, or the history and explanation of its birth, cannot demand our attention more than its *permission*. Its permission is generally explained, indeed, if we know why a creation was made. But the subject is capable of a different species of immediate illustration, although tending to the same result.

The history of the first period of the world looks like an intentional precipitation of the Adamic experience. The admission of the tempter to the abodes of the first pair, and his subtle and successful attempt to seduce them, could unquestionably have been prevented. It will be admitted that the derivation of a fallen posterity from Adam was entirely a divine arrangement.* The evil of the apostasy might have been stopped where it began, had it pleased God thus to have arrested it. *Here, then, is the positive institution of evil in the world by the divine purpose* — a fact, however, which we must carefully distinguish from the unavoidable nature of a moral creation in which it had its origin. Here is the first step in the real and great plan by which the creation is ultimately to rejoice in the wisdom of God. The Creator designed that the great race of beings, who are to pass away in illimitable generations from this world to others, should commence in evil, and “learn obedience through sufferings.” Let us not be startled with this fact. It cannot be questioned as a reality. No fact of science is better proved ; none of experience is more cer-

* Many of our theological speculations have gone upon the supposition that the perpetuation of a sinful race from Adam was a necessary act of justice. A preposterous and revolting conception of this kind has pervaded our theological systems, and imparted a fierce and malignant character to them. The Bible nowhere teaches that we descend from Adam with evil natures as an act of justice ; but it simply states *the fact* of such a descent. It has been this hypothesis which has given the harsh character to the otherwise generally excellent system of Calvin.

tain. All speculations upon the origin of evil absolutely aside, here is the fact.

The very striking analogy presented in the geological ages of our planet must ever arrest our attention. Our globe has attained the present perfection of its nature and purpose through processes which may be called evil. Hugh Miller very strikingly observes,* "I know not how it may appear to others; but, for my own part, I cannot avoid thinking that there would be a lack of proportion in the series of being, were the period of perfect and glorified humanity abruptly connected, *without the introduction of an intermediate creation of responsible imperfection*, with that of the dying irresponsible brute." Mr. Miller did not perceive how "the dying irresponsible brute" was a part of the plan, but his perception of the fact that it was so he very clearly states. The subject of evil, he confesses, put him upon "the confines of a grand mystery, which man, since the first introduction of sin into the world until now, has vainly aspired to comprehend."

The subject, however, if we study the plan of God at large, is not so obscure; and in fact it is only necessary to come out of the gulfs of theological speculation in which it has been plunged, and to study it in the light of Scripture only, to comprehend it. A system in which moral evil should palpably exist was the highest and wisest divine arrangement. Nor can the fact be incapable of some important elucidations. We will attend to some considerations upon the subject, and to the final results of all the steps of this essay.

1. It would clearly appear to be better that man should have been plunged by his Maker directly into evil, when a method of gradual and superior improvement was admissi-

* "Footprints of the Creator."

ble, rather than that the distinction between good and evil should have been slowly and feebly attained. It was desirable that evil, which would in some form necessarily exist, should present itself in sharp lines to the understanding; and the care of the Creator very manifestly provided for this. A very imperfect race, with qualified moral distinctions, would have existed, had an obscurity at first rested upon the distinctions of good and evil.

Huygens, as quoted by Sir David Brewster,* makes the striking remark, that if men had not been disquieted by any evil, they would have lived with undeveloped powers, content with brutal enjoyments, without art and without science. There appears to be something probable, though apparently much exaggerated, in this conception. Something would have been undoubtedly necessary to have stimulated the powers of voluntary beings to exertion, who were abundantly supplied with the means of gratifying their strongest passions. The peculiar sensitiveness which belongs to the skin of the Caucasian races, and their residence for the most part in temperate and cold climates, where their greatest resources have been called into exercise, have been important causes to which civilization is indebted. The sensitive skin of these races has felt every pulse of climatic and atmospheric changes, and has produced a stimulus to exertion which the coarser skin of the deeper-colored races has not caused them to feel.

But, unquestionably, cloudy moral distinctions would have acted in a state of innocence like an incubus upon the faculties of man. If the passions, those generators of human action, had been put under restraint from a fear of sin, very feeble results could have been expected from the human mind. The first effect of religious scruples upon a

* "More Worlds than One."

feeble and ignorant mind is often now depressing, and produces the reduction of a considerable force to great and troublesome inertness, and the result is not unfrequently degradation. The history of monastic establishments, not even excepting Port Royal, is supposed to illustrate this fact.

2. It is unquestionably a fact, that the Creator has designed to conduct men to perfection through a system of evil. As a matter of fact, there can be no doubt upon this subject whatever. Evil is an essential part of the initiatory or present mode of instructing mankind. When Peter asked what he and his brethren should have, as a reward of their sacrifices in the behalf of Christ, the memorable answer was returned, "There is no man who hath left house or brethren, &c., for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, brethren," and the like, "*with persecutions.*" (Mark x. 28-30.) The Scriptures reiterate it, as an invariable part of the divine economy, appertaining to the present life, that trial and suffering must be endured. Those portions of mankind which have received the Gospel, and whom it is the special purpose of Divine Providence to save, are continually admonished that their lot will demand firmness of resolution, and patient endurance. "Whom the Lord LOVETH he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. xii. 6, 7.)

There has been, however, an obstacle interposed to a full perception of the bearings of this doctrine, by the limited views entertained respecting the destiny and place in the creation belonging to the human race. When it has been shown that man is the principal creature in the universe, demanding the care of God; that the stupendous system of redemption was designed for him alone — God so LOVING

the WORLD; — and that his successive generations are to walk abroad, when purified here, over the distant places of the creation for illimitable ages: then it is apparent that the mystery departs from the permission of evil; and we may make the clear deduction from the facts, that evil was a system instituted for the good of man. Evil is truly a spectre, regarded as transiently permitted by God, whose powers of repelling us from a believing contemplation of the Deity, who is love, are all removed. The subject imposes upon us no greater labor than that of verifying the divine wisdom in the plan.

And, as regards this point, no one can doubt that perfection is attainable, and has been progressively attaining, under this system. A good man, under the discipline to which he is now subjected, will bear more than a favorable comparison, as to fortitude and endurance of character, with Adam himself in his innocent period in the garden. Many have suffered the pains of martyrdom rather than renounce their Christian profession; and thousands of Christians daily endure sacrifices with cheerfulness to which the temptation of Adam — if we make no allowance for a difference of condition — was a trifle. We cannot doubt that good men are in various ways subjected to greater temptations than Adam experienced, while their integrity remains unshaken. The trials of Job have, perhaps, been paralleled by those of no other man in the world; but Job held fast his integrity under the inducements of wife, friends, and the strongest subtillies of Satan. If the moral powers of the world are not now actually greater than they were in the time of David and Peter, why is it that we may assure ourselves that David's compound crime of adultery and murder, and Peter's cowardly and profane denial of his Lord, are impossible now with the same class of pious men?

Adam fell from the love of woman; and it is obvious that the moral powers of the world are greater in this respect than they were then. Greater they absolutely are; for there have been some who have held fast their integrity under the greatest shocks of every conceivable temptation. Baxter, Job, Brainerd, Payson, Washington, and a multitude of others, have been living proofs of this. A moment's inspection of the morality of the ancient church, of the lives of Jacob and others mentioned in scriptural history as numbered with the saved, and a glance at the portraiture of the primitive Christian church as drawn in the Pauline Epistles, will convince us that religious and moral conceptions are higher and broader and deeper now, and that their powers are greater, than they were in any other age of the world. The notion that the Christian church has receded from its first measures of grace can only arise from a singular oblivion as to the facts of the biblical record. When, too, we are to estimate the real progress of Christianity, we are not to count the numbers of its adherents, as an item of any moment, when compared with the vast leavening of the world which has taken place in the advancement of Christian principle and ideas. "The feeble" are now "as David," if "the house of David" have not yet become "as the angel of the Lord."

If it should continue to be alleged, in opposition to these considerations, that man stands isolated from any moral analogy, and that angels have not been subjected to any similar law of progression and evil, this has been already shown to be an error. Evil certainly found an admittance in their abodes, and these beings were subjected to its discipline. Is it impossible, we ask, that the depravities of animal nature in the ante-human ages of this planet may have been designed for a salutary influence

upon these beings? Besides, the whole economy of man is a matter of their constant inspection and concern. They are active agents in the affairs of the world; and if without complicity in the guilt of men, their misfortunes and evils, so to speak, attach to them, as great and incessant agents in resisting their power. The law of evil is, therefore, not disconnected with them. Even Christ, the apostle tells us, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. v. 8.)

Nor can we doubt that the process so auspiciously begun will attain the ultimate perfection for which it was plainly designed. It would be sufficient alone to know that this fact is explicitly declared in the Bible itself. At the close of Revelations we have the result or aim picturesquely and powerfully drawn. Evil, then, at the period to which this memorable prophecy relates, will have shrunk from its majesty, into its true spectral nature; a dishonored, dethroned, and withered divinity, with its ages of sin projected in spectral horrors around it, an eternal and salutary beacon to mankind. Its rusty keys of the sepulchre will hang inert, like the gibbet of other ages. Only, while it is believed that this object will be accomplished in heaven, the victory will be fought and won in the world. "Just are the ways of God, and justifiable to man."

"Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous sin will melt from earthly mould,
And hell [hades] itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day."

Nor does man become debased, nor the divine justice disparaged, by the mere existence of physical and moral evil in human nature and around it. We invoke a mo-

ment's attention to *the true notion of our moral condition*. We may theoretically, if we choose, regard the world as naturally sentenced to death. This is the condition in which divine wisdom has seen good to place us. All mankind are afflicted with moral disorders, from their birth; and all die. But this is a condition not absolute; it is affected by the condition of receiving the light of tradition and of the Gospel. In short, it is a condition from which we are voluntarily to extricate ourselves by the Gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And, as a matter of fact, in all except infants, death itself, as the great penalty, depends upon neglecting the condition of salvation. In short, "he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16.) In fact, the Bible assures us that sin and death will be abolished by the action of the Gospel. In other words, the theory of our condition will be altered; mankind will be placed in such a condition that they may universally, as is hardly the case now, choose life or death; and although infants now die without any sin of their own, we seem to be assured in the Scriptures that this will not be the case hereafter, for "the child shall die an hundred years old," and the distinction between heathens and Christians will no longer exist.

Now, there is nothing debasing to man in the fact that he is placed in difficulties and dangers from which he is to emerge. Nor is there anything disparaging to the wisdom of God in the fact that these natural difficulties and dangers exist, if they are causes necessary to excite him to responsible and virtuous action, and if they are not charged upon him as crimes.

The Saviour, in several declarations, very plainly assures us that men become guilty only by rejecting the means of their salvation; in short, that our moral condition is essen-

tially neutral until we accept or reject our opportunities of mercy. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins." "*This* is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." (John xv. 22; iii. 19; xvi. 8, 9.) These are very unequivocal passages; and their meaning is, when they are removed from their particular application to the Jews, that men are not condemned *until they have resisted the light*. Paul tells us that the heathen would not be condemned merely on account of their idolatrous systems; and that their unenlightened debasement did not awaken the divine anger like the sins of the enlightened Jews: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts xvii. 30.) There is nothing certainly unjust in this view of our natural condition. Even infants, when the moral condition of the world is higher, will not perish on account of the weakness of the world around them; but every human being born into this world will here have opportunities of salvation. As it is, evil of every sort has exerted a salutary influence upon mankind.

Physical evil has afforded a salutary impulse and a scourge to the world, in every age. The world might have been made without the vicissitudes of the seasons, and in such a manner as to have produced the sustenance of man with very little exertion of his care. It would have been possible to have disconnected the lower passions of men with the shame which attaches to them, and to have made modesty a virtue unknown in the world. But, if clothing

had been rendered unnecessary, and if there had been no occasion for cherishing life by the cultivation of the soil, how vast a chasm would have been made in the stimulants to labor which redeem our race from sloth, and which render imperative the exercise and knowledge of some species of virtue ! Without the clamors of appetite, and the assaults of changing seasons, man would have been, physically, little better than the orang of the forest ; and, morally, perhaps, from his greater intelligence and variety of passions, even worse than he. Evils have pursued man in every period of his existence. The ferocious tiger or wolf devoured his flocks in the primitive ages. The serpent and the scorpion threatened his ignoble repose in the luxurious plains of the south. His own uncleanness would destroy him. The rust, the weevil, and the locust, have since attacked his fields ; and his fellow-men, with lawless passions, have roused him to perpetual activity in every line in which his interests lie. If the world is his, he has been taught by physical evil that he must subdue it, to acquire its dominion. If he is a partner with his fellow-man in the common lot of humanity, he has had reflected upon himself, by the lawless violence of his fellows, the palpable necessity of virtue, and of safeguards for its preservation. Evil, therefore, does not sit securely enthroned in the physical world. It is no absolute master of the world. It is a servant of a high and beneficent power. Nor is its dominion any more supreme in the moral world.

Nothing is more extraordinary than the facts which present themselves to our attention when taking the beneficence of the Creator as a fact in this case, and in particularly considering it. All these facts collect together in one consideration, that the lessons of evil have been bound up by the Creator in the animal nature of man for his instruc-

tion as an inexperienced being. The wisdom of God was manifestly capable of deciding the question how man could be effectually and most safely taught evil and good. *The law of sin*, as an apostle teaches, *has been written in his members*.* Whatever temptations, therefore, sin can weave, its consequences lie preadmonishing within us. We need not tempt its awful chasms ; its abysses yawn at our feet. Our conflicting passions are perpetually settling the question of evil and good. We cannot shut our eyes to the distinctions between them. The delineation is drawn by the pencil of conscience every day. Subtile and stormy passions prompt us to evil ; but an inward monitor is at hand to point to the abyss, and an involuntary experience has shown us that the animal, mental, and moral man suffers loss by a submission to their power.

Truly wonderful is the wisdom of God in this method of instructing our race ; and the consideration of the subject in this light reduces to nothing the discussion of the metaphysical relations of the divine justice with the fall of man. These disquisitions have resulted, as is usual with such efforts, in the production of no truth, but in the evolution of much darkness. But the simple consideration of the facts in the case produces the light which had long been covered up, and again does evil fly from the fearful position which it seemed to occupy in the world. In short, virtue is clearly and solidly acquired by the opposition which it sustains. Had our eye never lighted upon ugliness, we should have been less able to comprehend the delicate tracings of beauty. The deformed monsters of the land and the sea, therefore, in matters of taste, are useful instructors of men, and the defilements of sin in our members instruct in a higher and more useful manner. God has plunged

* Rom. vii.

our susceptible nature, liable to so many temptations and dangers, into evil unacquired and involuntary ; he has rendered its experience bitter, *to teach us its nature, and to disgust us with its choice.* This is the simple explanation of the permission of evil. Job, whose comprehension of this subject was so much superior to that of many schools of theology since his time, said truly, "He knoweth the way that I take : when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Again, we might naturally expect to find this interesting subject elucidated in the doctrine of Christ. Even in the dawn of that dispensation which is to chase away the evils of the world, we find this elucidation clearly and affectingly made. We will refer only to one part of this elucidation, already once before referred to, the assumption of human nature by the Word or Son of God. This subject has been much obscured by "fathers" and schools, and its exhibitions have often been singularly contrived to conceal from us the most touching parts of the Redeemer's incarnation. We are taught that this incarnation was a manifestation "full of grace and truth ;" and we shall find it so. It is a clear part of the Scriptures' teachings that the Son of God took our actual nature, was clothed in actual flesh ; in short, assumed humanity, was a man, and will ever remain such — a lofty, superior, and extraordinary member of the human family. He is a man on his superior throne ; and the glorious expectation is assured us, in the Gospel, that we shall be raised to a participation in his glorious humanity hereafter, as he descended once to a lowly participation in our own. This subject is one of the most extraordinary and consoling doctrines of revelation. Who cannot look from a deified humanity appearing on earth to an extraordinary destiny of redeemed man ? If God, after the

epoch of the creation, in its resting period, collected his glories in the body of a man, and rendered himself representatively a member of our race, he showed in this act, in no dubious manner, the destiny of mankind. This is the great standpoint of religion. With this lever we uplift the world of evil, and look abroad upon a glorious and emancipated future.

The Saviour assumed our actual humanity, our humanity in its weakness and evil; was tempted, as we are told, in all points like as we are, yet without sin; and knows, from an experience of human evil, in the language of the Scriptures, how to succor and sympathize with our tempted nature.

Let no one be startled with the fact that the Saviour assumed our fallen humanity, for such it was. He was for a time a man, subject to like evils with us. The most sensitive defender of traditional orthodoxy need not be dismayed at a fact so clearly and so strongly stated in the Scriptures. Calvin himself, with the frankness and clearness characteristic of his mind, comments upon the remarkable passage referred to — Heb. iv. 15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" — in the following manner:

"It may be asked, what is meant by 'infirmities'? For the expression is variously received. Some understand, cold and heat, hunger, and other elements of our corporal state; then, contempt, want, and other incidents of this kind, as in many places in the epistles of Paul, especially 2 Cor. xii. 10. But it is a more just opinion that mental affections are comprehended with external sufferings, as fear, grief, dread of death, and the like. And certainly otherwise the qualification 'without sin' would

be added to no purpose, unless he intended such affections as in us are always vicious on account of our natural pravity; in Christ, however, in whom was the greatest rectitude and the most absolute purity, they were free from anything criminal. Poverty certainly, and diseases, and whatever is external to us, are not accounted sin. Therefore, when infirmities are mentioned, which are akin to sin, it cannot be doubted that affections of the mind are intended, to which our nature is exposed from its own weakness. For better in this respect is the condition of angels than our own, since they do not grieve nor fear, nor are they disquieted with various cares, nor do they stand in terror of death. These infirmities Christ willingly sustained, and was willing to contend with them, not only that he might acquire for us a victory over them, but that we might be persuaded that he is near at hand as often as they are experienced by us. So that he was not only in fact a man, but he received into himself the very qualities of our nature. Yet the restriction is added, 'without sin,' since this difference must always be distinguished between the affections of Christ and our own, that his were always regulated by the just rules of religion, while ours, emanating from a turbid fountain, always savor of the nature of their origin, for they are turbulent and unbridled." *

The assumption of our weak humanity shows in the most affecting manner that, however unfortunate in any respect may be our experience of evil, *the Son of God came and shared it with us*. The burden of this calamity becomes lighter under such a fact. The Son of God descended from his high estate and cast around him the mantle of our

* "Sed quaeri potest, quid per *infirmities* intelligat; varie enim accipitur hoc nomen. Quidam frigus et calorem," etc. — *Jo. Calvini in Pauli Epistolas Commentarii*.

miseries, and plunged into the depths of poverty and sufferings, for whatever other reasons, to offer us, the Scriptures assert, the consolations of his sympathy. The subject approaches its richest point of elucidation, when the wisdom and glory of the Creator, who appointed our lot of evil, become allied in a bodily manner with our sufferings. Were we able to offer no other solution, here we would rest an implicit faith.

CONCLUSION.

It has long appeared to the author a remarkable anticipation of a great truth, by the professors of theology at New Haven, in their hypothetical solution of the subject of evil, that God permitted sin to break out in this world and among angels, in a restricted sphere, and where he could govern it, for the great purposes of his wisdom. This, it is believed, will now be accepted as the true doctrine of this subject. These eminent professors, however, did not perceive the application nor attain the verification of their great conjecture. But how great and real does it become, when we contemplate man as the being who is to emerge in successive generations from this world of sin and evil, to overspread the universe with his hardly-acquired wisdom and virtue !

Who can doubt that such is a fact? We have no knowledge that any other worlds are inhabited by any other rational beings beside man. The improbability of a different supposition has been conclusively shown in the former part of this work. The universe is in its infancy, and man is the only being hitherto created capable of occupying the realms of nature. Nor did the first generations of good men receive their new bodily endowments, fitting them for the material worlds of space, until the establishment of

the Christian dispensation, and the advancement of the race far enough to render secure the commencement of the great plan.

When Christ came, therefore, the second time, in the concluding period of the first century of the Christian era, the populating of other worlds began. This is the great epoch in the universe, and with it the great era of the world and of the creation concur. The prophecies of our Lord and of John did not mark this period with too sublime an announcement.

We contemplate an august and inspiring truth ! A great cloud of obscurities resting upon the sacred page passes away before it. Theoretically the mystery has passed, and the full realization will be at length attained. The discoveries of astronomy assume a home-like splendor, and the doctrine of Christ is installed in a central place in the system of truth.

Man was announced at the creation as having dominion over the works of God. We see the extent and reality of this grant in this subject. It is a universal dominion. Nor has man wanted omens of his great destiny. His mind has been long accustomed to stretch itself over his future home. His glass and his numbers have developed it from a few bright twinkling points to vast systems and worlds. We accept the expression that the earth is "the domestic hearth"* of the universe. From this globe are all worlds, actual and material worlds, to be peopled !

And how truly is the verification of the scriptural intimation attained, that all things are purged by fire: "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Through ardent trials, man, and virtually through him the whole system of nature, is passing and purifying now.

* "Plurality of Worlds."

Evil is a fiery heat, a combustion, which has spread its ardent waves over the world.

The Scriptures may be allowed, therefore, to penetrate further than the glass of the astronomer. If astronomy teaches us the existence and mechanical laws of the celestial bodies, the Scriptures teach us their USES, and even denote to us their POPULATION. Gravitation may effect a material unity of the creation, but the doctrine of the universal dominion of man establishes a unity of purpose far higher and more sublime. The magnates of this splendid science of astronomy may lay down the telescope, and read the true glories of their discovered worlds in the great record of inspiration. CHRIST, rather than Copernicus or Newton, is the master of the true celestial science.

If the gazettes of the celestial worlds are not transmitted to the earth, we know nevertheless their inhabitants. Their histories are recorded on earth. Their names and their destinies are known. The records of the creation, the enrolment of its sons, are preserved in the chanceries of the world.

Some other ideas suggest themselves, in this concluding result.

We have no reason to think that any communication, visible or sensible, will ever take place, between this world and any other which has become the residence of perfected man. A system of probation might fitly preclude such a fact, and the testimony of scripture appears to make against it.

Still, after numerous centuries, the earth may not be spacious enough, under its present laws of reproduction, to contain its future and long-lived populations. In such an event, the families of man may be outspread over the other

members of our solar system. Such an event may occur; we do not know that it will.

In such a case, the unity of the human race, or the unity of the plan, might require that some means of communication should exist between the different planets of the solar system, as between the different continents now. The sea, as a barrier, may yield to the vast spaces of the heavens; and electricity, or some other power, span these immense gulfs.

But revelation is silent, or beclouded, upon this head; and we may be pardoned for the only conjecture which has been admitted in this work, and which we do not offer as a probability, but in the character of a possible event. Yet the unity of design, in the system to which we belong, may suggest the probability that man, in his perfecting or ascending state, is in some way to occupy it. We do not say how; perhaps in this way — perhaps in some other.

But between the earth, or between the solar system, as the case may be, and all the more numerous and perfected parts of the creation, no communication can be expected to occur beyond that mysterious influence — commerce it is not, the communication being altogether upon one side — which bears its mysterious, spiritual, angelic force upon mankind.

But the unity of the families of heaven seems to be declared in the sacred volume. No such isolations and schisms as exist in the withering sectarianisms of the world can be expected to mar the harmony of heaven. Between the different worlds and systems, therefore, of the outer and superior creation, a commerce may be carried on by adapted agencies, to which the now useless flight of comets may furnish some faint analogy.

Man, however, will, here in this world or system, be

launched upon a mysterious existence, whose wonders he is to learn first from the existing generation around him, and then from the experience of the past; and above all from the wisdom of the Divine Word. Here, in a world or state naturally cut off by impassable space from all others, he will pass through his condition of trial, inspired with the hope of a joyful and perpetual residence in some one of the systems whose light shines distantly upon his eye at evening and at night. He will ascend by faith to the condition of virtue meet for his future exaltation; and, with the wisdom of the increasing ages of the past cast at his feet, he will be wise for the lasting future.

Wonderful is this plan of the All-Wise and Great! A world, or a system, separated from all others, wheeling its silent and eternal course, at a vast remove, among or around the other systems of nature; offering the contemplation of the grandeurs of the perfected worlds; inspiring its populations with the faith and hope to win them; animating them with the histories of the beings who are there, and supplying them all, by unseen streams of departed spirits emerging from their earthly clay, with all their inhabitants! Truly, revelation is not the companion of science, but the majesty to which it must bow. Christianity will never, in the progress of the future, in the development of the destiny of terrestrial man, "ask leave to be." It sits enthroned, the light, the glory, the salvation, of all future men.

We may be excused for another glance at the omens and earnestness of the glorious celestial future of the redeemed and justified man. Will there ever be a more perfect being than man?*

We might say, in reply, let us admit that, for aught we

* "Plurality of Worlds."

know, there might be a creation more perfect than the present. Yet we know little, almost nothing, nothing except by analogy and scriptural inference, of the adaptations and perfection of the present creation. But we know, or may safely conjecture, that the creation is perfectible, by its natural changes and by the skill of its inhabitants. Man himself is perfectible upon a scale adequate to meet and to command all its probable and ascending perfection. If any other beings are superior to him, there are no beings with material endowments fitted for the occupation of nature beside man. If angels are greater in power and might, we have no evidence that their intellectual or moral capacities are superior. If they are adapted to their sphere, it is not unreasonable to think that man is equally adapted to his. We cannot doubt that man, perfectible and increasing in wisdom and goodness, is fitted to occupy the extent of nature, however vast; to subdue it for his uses as an intelligent being, and to command it for the glory of his Creator. Man, made "in the image of God," must be capable of this. He has intellect and moral capacity enough, and bodily energy enough, for the purpose. Unless, therefore, the creation ascends higher in its progression than the proportional development of man, individual and collective, — unless, in short, another creation rises superior to the present, — our search need extend no further than man. His bodily powers are separated by impassable chasms from all the animal races beneath him. In beauty, in capacity, in dignity, he surpasses them all; and not only does this, but outruns all suggestion of analogy. The beauty of the horse is a model or type vastly inferior to man.

But a help comes to this contemplation. When the Son of God cast around him the form of man, it might be taken as an acknowledgment of the essential perfection of this

human shape and nature. But when the human body assumed arose from the grave, and departed from all visible appearance from the world, and the Son of God was clothed still with a body belonging to man, it was an evidence that the perfection of bodily forms had reached its limit. There may be varieties in the new organization. We are told of one — the absence of sex. But these variations may be expected to fall within a very narrow range, in view of the deified and perpetual humanity of Christ. He is still, to visible sight, a man, a recognizable man. The Scripture supports the idea that the body of man, taken as a character or form, survives his mortal state. It may not be the identical body, and doubtless is not, as regards material elements; but it is the same body in essential nature — the body of man. We shall not conclude that the deified humanity of Christ will be surpassed by other bodily forms; and we shall not, therefore, conclude that the body of man has not reached its ultimate essential perfection. The body of Christ was transfigured, simply and recognizably changed, upon the mount; and such, whatever it was, may be the whole of the corporeal alteration of man. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised *incorruptible*, and we shall be *changed*. For *this* corruptible must put on incorruption, and *this* mortal must put on immortality.” Nothing, in conjecture, in probability, or in fact, rises, therefore, higher than man. His ascension is in the realm of intellect and of moral perfection. Over this infinity he will expand, and within all other conditions essentially remain.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understand-

ing being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, *according to* the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [or age], but also in that which is to come; *and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*" (Eph. i. 17-23.)

This is the result in the words of Scripture. The reader must now withdraw his attention from the humble merits of the author, and lay aside his doubts, if any remain, and allow his surprise its full sway of wonder, by contemplating the Word of God itself. August, indeed, is the destiny of man, if in it is comprised all the **FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL!**

Most high and reverent and earnest praises to Him who will reproduce his glory in mankind! Amen, and amen!

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